

THE FEAR OF CONGREGATIONAL
ABANDONMENT CAUSED BY
ITINERANT MINISTRY

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2018

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project**

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ABSTRACT

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Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church located at 3301 Milwaukee Street, Denver, Colorado has declined due to itinerancy of pastors and unstable leadership. Relationships have become broken, they have gone through a period of feeling abandoned by their pastors and the A.M.E. Zion Church. The hypothesis of this study will equip church leaders in overcoming the fear of going through abandonment during Itinerant Ministry. This study will use measuring tools such as surveys and questionnaires. The anticipated outcome of this project will identify strengths and weaknesses within the membership that will result in church growth now and in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to thank God for giving me the strength and endurance during this entire process. I would like to thank my wife Deborah, my daughters Portia and DeShonda, and my sons Darrian, Jamire, and Ma’Jore for their understanding and patience given to me through this process. I know at times it may have been a struggle, but I am grateful for their support.

I would like to thank my mother and father for instilling in me the value of education. I want to thank my brothers and sisters for all their love and prayers.

I want to thank the late Bishop Cecil Bishop for ordaining me and appointing me to pastor my first church, and for that I am forever grateful. I am thankful to my Bishop, Bishop W. Darin Moore for his continued prayers and for his fatherly leadership. I have grown as a pastor, father, husband and man under his leadership. I want to thank Dr. Algeania Warren Freeman who was there for me and helped guide me during her tenure at Livingstone College as I became the first out of eight siblings to receive a college education. I want to thank my mentor the Rev. Dr. J. Elvin Sadler for encouraging me to pursue my Doctor of Ministry. I want to thank him for pushing and challenging me during this process. The hard work has paid off.

I want to thank Ms. Naomi Diggs, Ms. Carolyn Cosby, and Mrs. Sandra Crowder for making sure that I had all my I’s dotted and T’s crossed.

I want to thank my peers who have gone on before me, and those who are yet alive for encouraging me and not allowing me to quit. You guys have been great, and for that I want to say thank you. I want to thank my peer associates, my context associates, and my professional associates for their time and leadership.

I want to thank the late Rev. J. R. Scarborough for nurturing and tutoring me as a young preacher. To my home church, Pleasant Hill A.M.E. Zion Church, I say thank you for your motherly and fatherly love that you gave me while growing up in the church. Thank you for the prayers and the love.

DEDICATION

To my mother, Louise Little, who raised me in a Christian home and taught me the importance to stay rooted and grounded in the Lord. To my father, the late Dee Campbell, who was always there for me and encouraged me in everything I set out to do. You were my motivator, and I miss you dearly. To my deceased elder brother Bobby Ray Little and my elder sister Julia Gill, who helped raise me and whom I consider to be my mother and father. I know you both are looking down on me rejoicing. I miss you, and I will always treasure the discipline and encouragement that you instilled in me. Until we meet again!

Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

The research conducted in this project was centered on identifying ways to prepare congregations to adjust to constant pastoral change. Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has gone through a series of pastoral changes and this project will educate them and prepare them to accept pastoral change.

The congregation could not understand why they had to continue to go through pastoral change. They also felt as if the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church had abandoned them. This project is designed to help the participants become knowledgeable about the Methodist church's polity on itinerant ministry. The project participants agreed to attend class sessions, they agreed to participate in being interviewed and they were engaged in the sessions by asking questions. This training served as a guide for future new members that join the AME Zion church and do not understand how the itinerant process work.

The first chapter that included my synergy allowed me to quickly understand what my ministry focus would be. After going through many changes in my life, I gained a greater understanding and appreciation of the call that has been placed upon my life. I am convinced that the years of experience of serving in the military equipped me for many opportunities in life. After arriving at this context, I begin to see the correlation between my life and the problems members of Spottswood were going through. When I evaluated the two, I realized that God was truly present. God has brought me all the way from

Rutherfordton, North Carolina to Denver, Colorado to bring about a change into the hearts and minds of this congregation.

The biblical foundation of this project made the members aware that God will never forget them, and that God will not allow anything to happen to them. As the church felt like they were being abandoned it was my hope that they would find consolation in the biblical text. As David found consolation in knowing that God was with him, Spottswood too must know that God was with them. The biblical text out of the New Testament also laid a stable foundation for the membership. The membership was comfortable in knowing that the pastor is here for them and not for his own being. A good leader will protect his or her congregation from others that are trying to harm them and Spottswood knew that I had their best interest at heart. Failure to not listen to the shepherd's voice will damage the church and keep the church from growing and making a difference in the community. The biblical foundation of this model will help inform the project participants that every member is just as important as the next. Every pastor should care for the entire congregation and every member must follow the Shepherd to remain in line with the biblical text. Failure to follow the shepherd that God has placed to pastor the church will cause the church to decline and become ineffective in the community. These failures will also turn people away from the church and leadership roles in the church and the body of Christ.

The historical foundation laid out for the congregation how itinerant ministry started. This third chapter taught the members how to accept the polity in which the Methodist church operate. The historical foundation of this project provided the participants with the knowledge of itinerant ministry and how it works in the African

Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Utilizing the universal model of ministry, participants received a wealth of information to enhance their thinking. This historical foundation informed the participants that itinerant ministry is exceptionally important in the life of the church.

The history of itinerant ministry is of great importance because many of the members of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church do not understand what itinerant ministry means. The historical foundation of this project provided the members with a framework to address the problem of feeling abandoned due to itinerant ministry. Those members that will be participating in the classes and sessions will now gain a better understanding as to how pastors are appointed and why they are sometimes moved.

Chapter four provided the theological foundation of the model. This chapter taught the participants how to look at things from a pastoral point of view. Pastors are wounded and hurt just as the congregations are when they are moved. The theological foundation provides the members with a greater understanding that the pastor is a representative of God. From a pastoral theology view, it is safe to say that the pastor is a person that requires the special discipline that enables him or her to lead a congregation. The members will be challenged to follow the clergyman that God has placed with them but also know that it will not be forever.

The theoretical foundation of this model informed the participants that abandonment can cause traumatic events in a person's life. It was important to teach the members that grieving is fine, but they must not allow the issues they are grieving over keep them from moving forward. This chapter also enabled the members to conduct a self-evaluation of how many times they have hurt someone. The members were advised

that it is alright to seek help from a licensed life coach or psychologist if they have experienced a hurt that was so bad that they just could not continue. It was important to evaluate the theory of this model and the impact that it will be making in the lives of many congregations.

Chapter six, the final chapter, provides insight and feedback as it relates to the research that was conducted. This model educated its participants about practical and strategical ways mentors can help make choosing ministry easier. Using qualitative research and time training, the participants learned how to encourage mentees and using the ethical practice to their lives.

This training model was conducted over a six-week period where the model participants were educated about the importance of itinerant ministry and how it not only affects the congregation but the pastor as well. Through open dialogue, interviews, teaching, assignments, and surveys, these project participants were provided with material to help recognize that congregations should never feel that they are abandon.

It is the intention of this Doctor of Ministry project that these participants develop an understanding of how to help the transition of pastoral leadership feel welcome. This model will help identify the strengths and weakness of the participant and it will help the congregation gel together and become a unified church.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The ministry is one of the greatest services that can be rendered to the community. The focus of this service is the ability to create relationships between God and his people. Therefore, I am always seeking ways of forming relationships while engaging in ministry. Although God established the ultimate relationship between himself and man, this relationship has taken a downward spiral. People that struggle to keep this relationship intact find themselves going through a critical transformation to be effective ambassadors of Christ. The Word of God implies that relationships are one of the most important resources we can have in this service to Him. Love is spoken of throughout the Bible as a necessary building block in the formation of any relationship.

The many stages of my life experience and Christian journey include several salient features. One of those influences was my family dynamics. Being raised in a very close family environment in which we were taught how to love one another, have close relationships and my mother required us to go to church but not only go but to also participate. Even though there were struggles in my life growing up due to a poor relationship with my father the determination was strong to seek ways of healing. During my journey I became inclined to change the way I thought about people and things. I distanced myself from the people that did not have a positive influence in my life. During this time, I began to seek after those that would help me through my struggles

during my personal transformation. This change in my life had a very strong impact on me and my family. It came requiring a different lifestyle which involved excluding various things such as giving up the night life and the drinking that previously played a part in my life. The change gave me a deep satisfaction and the urge to become better and serious about what was taking place in my life. I began to have a serious interest in church and began to read and study the Bible and read a myriad of Christian books. I was gradually making that transformative step. Many of my friends did not show me the support nor did they have the same interest as I did to make the transformation, but I stayed the course. Many times, I had to stop and question myself and ask, “Are you sure this is what you want to do?”

Through prayer and talking with God, I began to find myself growing stronger and gaining a much healthier relationship with God. Through gaining a healthy relationship with God I was able to have conversations with individuals who had gone through similar transformative processes. Having these conversations further awakened a desire for spiritual growth, and a deeper desire for God. I started to discover that a paradigm shift was taking place within me and through the transformation process I began to see the desperate need to engage people in strengthening their relationships, whether it was with God or with other people. My military career also equipped me with the ability to interact with others and resolve issues and challenges that hindered or limited relationships. Although there were many unresolved issues that I left undone during my life, I never doubted my ability to help others strengthen their relationships.

Basis for Doctor of Ministry Project

The initial assessment of the problem at Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church indicates that over the years the congregation has been hindered with leaders that have abandoned them due to the itinerant ministry that is prevalent in the denomination. I want to help Spottswood rebound from the impact of being abandoned by pastors and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Spottswood has failed to grow spiritually or physically because of the distrust, conflicts and challenges that infested and hindered the growth of the church. Second, the members of the church struggled with following leadership due to the lack of training according to the polity of the A.M. E. Zion Church. They were not following the *A.M.E. Book of Discipline* and this was one of the major reasons the church was in disunity and was not growing. While I cannot claim competence for a full assessment of the complexity of these problems, nor conjure a guaranteed solution that would make them better, I believe they are worthy of a ministry project. Objectively, examining the causes of these problems could very well open up the framework to find solutions. Therefore, I am willing to undertake and develop a well-designed ministry project in hope of remedying these challenges and revitalizing this organization.

I am convinced that my training in the United States Marine Corps and my calling as a minister of the gospel have equipped me to be competent to take on this project. However, I do wonder if previous leaders noticed the same problems and tried to resolve the problems. When a church is growing, everyone is excited, they are happy, and the pressures are relieved, and they really feel like they are a church family. The joy on their faces when the service is at a high-spirited and many visitors are in the pews, members

talk about how great the service was for days. When the regular Sunday scenario becomes a day when only a few people show up and no visitors are in the pews, the first reaction is denial. Then the rationalizations start: “It is winter, and the older members don’t get out when it is cold.” “It is summer, and everyone is on vacation.” All too often, the people see the problem but really do not want to deal with it because they do not want to upset the family that pays the most money in the church. Then, too, previous administrations may have attempted to address these problems but could not because of the lack of spiritual leadership, seminary experience and the leadership skills to address conflicts and situations in the church. Another hindrance is often the long driving distance from the church for pastors assigned to churches far from their homes. These circumstances make it difficult, and often impossible for a minister to give the proper training, engage the members in meetings and educate them. Spottswood exemplifies such churches. There are only superficial relationships in the church and the church was split due to the lack of leadership and accountability.

The unsettling nature of these challenges clearly call for a well-guided ministry project, and because these problems are aligned with my career and my ministry interest, I am committed to find the root cause as well as to help develop a model that will create a positive outcome. My military experience, as well as my academic background in religious studies, provides me with the basis for this project. There is a strong interest in ministry and because of that strong urge I have made myself available to attend various training programs as well as church conferences to better equip myself. Many books have been read and I have listened to many sermons from various preachers while undergoing this transformative process. I have personally pursued personal development and church

administrative skills that will bring everyone in my sphere of influence a path toward growth and improvement. Moreover, I have become more aware that there are many limitations that Christians often experience, and those limitations can hinder their growth process as well as changing their minds about being a Christian. Furthermore, many Christians often become consumed with their past hurt and failures and allow their past to dictate their future.

There are many individuals that move beyond their past and become more amenable to change. Due to some unresolved challenges many have taken on the mindset that the church belongs to them and that they will not follow the rules and traditions of the denomination and cause major problems within the congregation. Initially, I thought that this problem only existed inside Spottswood but upon sharing my disgust with other pastors, I found that they were experiencing the same problems within their respective congregations, so I decided that as a pastor I must convince the people that there is a better way to get things done and that way is having a relationship with God and following leadership. This task was quite daunting because there were some that wanted change and others that knew if change came it would disrupt their comfort zone. I always had in the back of my mind that this could easily cause a major conflict within the church because of its being a family church, so I began to put leadership teams in place and meet with different family members of the church and share with them that the church needed them, and they needed the church. It was immediately recognized that all they wanted was someone to show them that they were loved and that they were needed for the ministry to grow. This method paid off because we were able to undergo the process and

effectively find resolutions to mentally resolve many problems that were infesting the way the congregants thought.

As I prayed about and pondered these challenges it became quite clear that the main reason that membership growth has not taken place in this church was because of improper teaching and inadequate leadership. I also realized that there were situations that had taken place within the church on behalf of the members that could have been avoided, but the leadership kept closed lips and refused to respond because of the fear of losing members. Going through and experiencing these problems for decades caused major problems that demanded solutions. Therefore, after much prayer and fasting, I am well prepared to pursue this ministry project to help this church move in the right direction.

Developing an awareness of context when fostering transformative learning is developing a deeper appreciation and understanding of the personal and sociocultural factors that play an influencing role in the process of transformative learning.¹ The context of this project is Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church located at 3301 Milwaukee Street, Denver, Colorado. Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is located between the “territories” of two known gang groups. The Bloods are located on the east side and the Crips are located on the west side. These neighborhoods are predominately black and include other African American churches, such as African Methodist Episcopal, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Missionary Baptist, Church of God in Christ, and United Methodist. We have established a great working relationship with these churches, and we support each other when help is needed.

¹ Jack Mezirow and Edward W. Taylor, *Transformative Learning in Practice: Insights from Community, Workplace, and Higher Education* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A. Wiley, 2009), 11.

Whatever the need is from any of the churches, there is no hesitance in aid. Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has approximately seventy-five members. Statistically, approximately fifty to sixty show up on a regular basis. Denver can experience all four weather seasons in one day, and during the snowy winter season the attendance is better than the summer season. It is very important that the members that we have continue to show up and support the church because we want to be able to reach out and help other churches when they are in need.

The community also consists of Latinos and Ethiopians. Most of the Ethiopians in the community do not attend church. We have had some success recruiting the Latinos, but they come for a few weeks and then go away. In the African American section there is a high rate of unemployment. Some of the younger African Americans who could work hang out in front of what they call “the flats.” Although thousands are moving to the city of Denver, economy is not the best for the African Americans. Most of the older women and men are retired hospital and school workers, and because Colorado is a military state, many military retirees have made Colorado their residence. Spottswood has access to many colleges such as Colorado State University, University of Colorado, Iliff School of Theology, Metro State University and many community colleges. Many young people move to Colorado to attend these colleges and are looking for a church home and we need a productive ministry that will attract these young people because there are numerous churches located near these colleges.

Spottswood is a family-oriented church. The Williams and the Patterson families are the largest families in the church, comprising about one-fourth of the membership. Each of these families are sisters, brothers, cousins, or extended families. Most of the

spouses of the older ones have died. Their children are not as concerned for the church, and therefore do not support the church as much as their parents do. Since the congregants are family oriented, their loyalty and sense of obligation to the church is often conflicted. Even though they are divided by several black denominational churches between families, not only do they help each other, but they also consider the other churches to be sister churches as well. One of the reasons for that is families are divided up amongst the Baptist, AME, CME, and AME Zion churches. Family marriages have contributed to such division.

First there were several problems that affected the harmony and ministry of the church. One problem was a power struggle between members. The power struggle among church leaders stemmed from not having the proper teachings about the A.M.E. Zion Church's doctrine and polity. This lack of awareness allowed members to want to do things their way. Several members did not want to follow *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, which is the "law book" of the denomination. Upon arriving at Spottswood, for instance, I noticed the order of service did not follow the A.M.E. Zion's order of service. There was a great power struggle between the Steward Board and the Trustee Board. The Trustee Board was handling all the church's finances, which according to the *Book of Discipline* is the duty of the Steward Board. In fact, the Steward Board was not functioning and was not in operation. When I began to organize the church and put the church in order according to the *Book of Discipline*, I received a lot of resistance. Some of the members stated, "It is working so why change it?" The church was struggling for this very reason because members supporting the church felt that a one group of people had complete control over the church. The previous

pastor lived about one hour and a half away, so he really did not attend to the business of the church because he came to the church only on Sundays and allowed the members to have control over the church.

Secondly, because of the lack of pastoral leadership, the church was slowly dying. Pastors were assigned there that did not have college or seminary degrees and only relied on what they were taught by other uneducated pastors. Upon arrival, I found a beautiful church, with beautiful members that were crying out for leadership. New life, new ideas and many different ministries were introduced to the church and gave the people an opportunity to participate in ministry, thereby giving them the understanding that the church was for everyone. It did not belong to a certain family and a certain group of people; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church's order is not based on a ruling family, but the Episcopacy. In A.M.E. Zion churches, the body is supposed to be broken into different boards and auxiliaries; each with a function. There was a power struggle in the new church, and it had problems solving issues. The church began to grow in membership. Before I was appointed, the membership had fallen to about twenty people. Members started to return and new members started to join under my ministry.

Thirdly, most of the congregation at Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church consists of an older generation of women whose husbands were deceased. There also is a high ratio of women who are unmarried with children. Their children have children. The mothers are doing the best they can to raise anywhere from one to three children without a father. The grandmothers in the congregation are even raising some of the male children. Most of the young African American males in the church are unemployed and do very little to support the church. Most of the members in Spottswood

receive government assistance at the first of each month. As a result, some of the young people have self-esteem issues and low grades in school. This is a sad situation for the church on one hand, but on the other it does open the door for ministry.

In the congregation, there are fourteen men and twenty-two women that range from fifty to ninety years of age, ten men and nine women are in the age range of twenty to forty-nine, six children are under the age of twelve. The women however, dominate the congregation. Most of work is handled by the women at the church as well as home.

Spottswood is a very committed church, and financially there are always those who will give more than others. Only a small portion of the church tithes; their money can be scarce at times. The saving grace is that the congregation will pull together in the end to make sure what they consider important gets done. Church attendance is not where it should be. It certainly could be better. This church has struggled with people coming in the front door and leaving out the back. Most of the youth do not attend church, as they should because they do not value the church.

This church has never done much outreach. Nevertheless, we were able to reach out to the gang communities and bring them together which had a positive effect in the community and in the church. The members were not happy at first when the gang members started to come to the church, but they have accepted them now and look forward to seeing them in worship either on Friday night or on Sunday morning. The church provides for the sick and shut periodically throughout the year, and if someone asks them to do a special project, they will go out of the way to make sure it is done correctly. Most of the members are educated to tertiary levels. The women are more

educated than the men and tend to hold better jobs as well. The main reason for this trend is possibly the larger population of women in the church.

Needs of the Ministry

Having existed for sixty-three years, Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church needs a complete overhaul in resolving the issues that affect the harmony and the unmet needs of the people in the church and community. Being part of the Methodist denomination, the itinerate ministry must play a big role when it comes to church leadership. Therefore, Episcopal leadership should continue to appoint qualified leaders to pastor this church to maintain church growth and be an effective ministry. Spottswood needs leaders with the courage to take on the challenges of the church and the knowledge and skill to develop a solution to arrest the psychological strain on the ministry and foster sustainable growth in the ministry. While the leadership tried to manage the ministry of the church during those challenging times, church continued as usual: service went on as usual, families came and went while other families that were founders of the church stayed and worked restless hours trying to find ways of keeping their church afloat and from keeping it from being a disappointment in the community.

The church also needs to experience a cultural shock because of the diverse communities that are near the church. Various discussions with many church members ascertained that one of the major problems is that the church has failed to do meaningful outreach in the community. Spottswood is a predominately black congregation and once had a white pastor, so many times when we went to the community to do outreach many of the black people still thought that the church had a white pastor who had been gone

seven years. To achieve accountability, Spottswood needs teaching and training that will motivate the membership to do outreach and reach the diverse families that are moving to the area.

The Community

The community in which Spottswood stands is a very diverse neighborhood with an enormous rate of Ethiopians and Hispanics moving to the area. As I researched the dynamics of this population shift, I found that Aurora metro area homes include more than 30,000 Ethiopians *The Denver Ethiopian Yellow Pages* includes 118 Ethiopian-owned businesses, and their seventeen metro-area restaurants are fixtures not only for fellow countrymen, but a trendy favorite of foodies as well. Moreover, Denver is known to be one of the most educated cities in the country and known to be one of the healthiest city in America, due in part to the immense recreational options the city offers. The active job market, fresh air, and good climate has caused many people to relocate to the Denver area, especially immigrants with educated backgrounds looking for work. The demographic makeup of non-white Denver is primarily Hispanic American. Over half of the foreign-born population is Latino, and approximately one-third of the overall population of the city of Denver is of Latino decent. A large portion of the Latino community is either Mexican or from the Latin-Caribbean countries. Many neighborhoods and shopping centers are beginning to reflect the ever-growing Hispanic populations.

As one of the country's primary destinations for immigrants, Denver also has a growing Asian population with many immigrants from Asian countries coming each year.

In fact, the Asian population has nearly doubled over the last ten years, especially from Southeast Asian countries. Denver has a fast-growing refugee population from Myanmar (formerly Burma) with at least 1000 refugees resettling in Denver. Although the city does not have one of the largest Japanese populations in the country, it does have one of the fastest growing Japanese populations, which has more than tripled over the past couple of decades.²

Ministerial Skills and Experience

My personal experience of traveling from country to country while being in the United States Marine Corps and my experience as a pastor has taught me to become familiar with different cultures and backgrounds and to embrace that experience. While I feel reasonably competent to undertake this project, it cannot be construed merely as a career feat; rather I am quite convinced it is part of my calling. I trust the experience and the training that I have received. My ministerial skills of leadership will help me develop a project that will inspire people to become leaders and establish good working relationships. There may be times when I feel that the experience that I have will not be enough and will not be the answer but even through any adversity, I must stay the course. The satisfaction of knowing that I am helping others through a transformation process deepens my relationship with God also. I had the privilege of being the pastor of five other congregations, all with different issues that hindered the ministry, but I gained

² International Mission Board, "Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area," PEOPLEGROUPS.info, accessed September 23, 2016, <https://peoplegroups.info/site/MetroHighlight/id/19740/name/Denver-Aurora-Lakewood>.

valuable knowledge and will use every situation that I experienced from each church to help make this project more meaningful.

My passion for the ministry is my driving force because it gives me the chance to help people. Even though some people do not want to be helped, there are those that are crying out for help, and I believe that as a minister, my purpose is to see that their needs are met. Will I be able to help everyone? “No” but, I must seek after those who are willing to be helped and help them become stronger Christians. Spottswood has settled for leaders that really did not attempt to address the issues that they were facing, leaving the members to manage the church’s affairs until the major problems arose. One example of how the former pastor’s behavior contributed to the decline of the church was his one-way commute of two hours. On days when the traffic was backed up on the freeway he could not make it to church in time. He then resorted to a last-minute request for one of the local preachers to carry on with worship service. At these times, those who wanted to run the church sought ways to do what they wanted. The weather in Denver also kept him from driving in the snowy conditions. The church was further harmed because although the church has a parsonage in Aurora just minutes away, he chose not to live in the parsonage. This situation further alienated the members, who came to feel that he was not willing to be close to them. These issues led to a decline in the membership in the church and to the church having different lay leaders who eventually took charge and abandoned to dictates of *The Discipline* of the church.

When I received the call from the assigned bishop, he made it clear to me that he knew of my military background and was interested in bringing me to Denver to become pastor of Spottswood. Not only was he aware of my background of being in the military

and having to pack up and move often, but he was also aware that the church was in dying need of a pastor and family willing to live in the parsonage and immerse themselves in the community. The many challenges faced in my pastoral leadership and military experience is that some of the most adverse places gave me the energy and the enthusiasm to help transform this church into one that will no longer feel that they have been abandoned by their leadership and by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. I believe they will feel that they are one of the healthiest and growing churches in Denver, Colorado.

The problem of unresolved conflicts among church memberships is a common problem. The more pronounced the problem, the more difficulty the leadership will have in addressing the unmet needs of the congregation. Any meaningful and effective solution to the challenges at Spottswood Church must include a transformative approach aimed at leading individual members to come forth and accept change and address their unresolved conflicts. I am increasingly convinced that through the training and teaching of various leadership development programs, the Spottswood church will begin to move from being a maintenance church to a missional church. The church must get away from accepting the status quo and engage in new approaches to enhance the ministry and draw new perspective members. People come to church longing for, yearning for, hoping for this sense of roots, place, belonging, sharing, and caring. People come to church in our time with a search for community, not committee. Ministers often make the mistake of assuming that putting people on a committee will develop ownership for the objectives of the church. People are not looking for ownership of objectives or for functional,

organizational, institutional goals. They are looking for home, for relationships. They are looking for the profound depths of community.³

The Methodology of the Project

The nature of my project will help the members of Spottswood gain a sense of hope and encouragement and relief from the sense of abandonment that left them discouraged and their relationships unstable. I will use leadership programs and engage them in community involvement to strengthen their outreach in the community. This project will serve as a model for the present members and for the new members that will be joining. There will be a collaborative effort to strengthen their knowledge of *The Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* as well as develop new relationships with the different conferences in the denomination. I will use different measuring tools and surveys that will engage the members, so I will know their strength and their weaknesses. One of the tools I will be using is The Church Health Assessment Tool (CHAT), which has been used by many kinds of congregations, including mainline congregations, non-denominational, and historically evangelical faith communities. This assessment tool is designed to be used during times of change, periods of new developments and when a congregation is beginning a strategic planning process. CHAT was developed after extensive research with over 2000 congregations and individuals. This research identified ten traits of vital ministry (some of which are God-Exalting Worship, Wise Administration and Accountability, Networking with the Body of Christ).

³ Kennon L. Callahan, *Effective Church Leadership: Building on the Twelve Keys* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass A. Wiley, 1990), 106.

This survey will give clarity on decision making, sound affirmation in the areas where ministry is excelling and clear insight into where attention is needed the most. CHAT will provide that framework through helpful charts, graphs, and specific feedback and help monitor church health in a measurable way. Members of the church family will appreciate knowing that their feedback is important and necessary in order for the church to grow in healthy, life-transforming ways.⁴

I will also use Natural Church Development (NCD). National Church Development has developed a strategic planning and implementation program that has proven effective in thousands of congregations worldwide. Central to the NCD process is an assessment that measures for eight “quality characteristics” which NCD’s extensive research shows are vital to healthy, growing congregations. Based on the results of the assessment, participating congregations develop a strategy to strengthen their own weakest points. Periodic reassessments measure progress and inform course corrections. In addition to providing assessment tools and publications on the core NCD process, there are complementary resources. It will include books and videos detailing NCD’s foundational theology, and books dedicated to developing each of the quality characteristics.⁵

Not only will this project bring transformative healing to the church, but it will also allow my strengths and weaknesses to be revealed. This project will help bring healing to me as I had to deal with the feeling of abandonment while growing up. It will

⁴ “What We Offer,” Leadership Transformations, accessed September 24, 2016, <http://www.leadershiptransformations.org/church-health-assessment-tool.htm>.

⁵ “Natural Church Development,” The Congregational Resource Guide, accessed September 26, 2016, <http://thecrg.org/resources/natural-church-development>.

help bring closure to those areas in my life where I experienced hurt and pain and give me greater strength to minister to those with similar experiences. My hope is that I will see the change take place in the mindset of the people of Spottswood and they will once again feel that they are a proud church that will grow and build meaningful relationships with each other and with the community. My hope that this change will take hold and last so that even after I have moved on to another congregation I can rejoice because the transformation process brought love and healing to Spottswood.

Conclusion

The impact that Christ has on my life has placed me on a journey that I love. Throughout my life I have found great joy and hurt working with people but through it all, I became a stronger pastor, teacher, husband, father and person. Unresolved conflicts will always be a part of our lives, but it will take people to engage in processes and efforts and work tirelessly to help resolve these problems.

I really think that this project will be a success and help solve the problems and serve as a measuring tool for the years to come. It will develop a strategy for the ministry and will be used to enhance relationships and leadership that will create a very positive outcome. I will examine the relationships of the members and use the findings to test the effectiveness of this project as a tool to further improve the group dynamics and proper functioning of church leaders. With a successful outcome, the church will become healthier and members will begin to love each other and become positively engaged in vital ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Addressing the issues that have taken place at the Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has been an overwhelming experience. Before accepting the appointment to Spottswood it was made clear from the Presiding Bishop that made the appointment that the church has gone through a series of leadership changes and because of the constant change of leadership the members have developed a sense of abandonment. Due to this abandonment, it left the membership with a bitter taste in their mouths and they could not trust any leader and the friendship became bitter.

Building a relationship with a nonhuman, all powerful Creator is an entirely different affair than developing a solid friendship with another human being. For one thing, humans are limited, whereas God is unlimited. This greatly changes the kinds of things we can expect to receive in the relationship. You cannot look to a human to satisfy your every need. That would be like trying to pour a gallon's worth of water out of a single cup. You cannot expect a human to be totally trustworthy or dependable. Humans are frail. They easily crack under pressure. The most noble man could be persuaded to compromise his character under the right circumstances. The most devoted spouse could be tempted into having an affair if they were put under enough strain.

We all have needs which humans are incapable of fulfilling but at first humanity may not realize this flaw. Humans enter human relationships with expectations that

are way too high only to end up crushed and disillusioned when people fail us. Once hurt badly, one never wants to be hurt again. Yet humans are extremely needy creatures and their needs cripple them when they continue to go unmet. Humans must find a source that can give them the things needed, and ultimately this is what will drive them to God. The Creator is the only One who can truly satisfy us. Once we are told this, we get back out those lofty expectations that we used in human relationships and we expect God to be everything that we want Him to be. He does not always answer when we pray. He does not allow us to see Him or sense His Presence in some affirming way. He is far more mysterious and strange than we were expecting. He does things to us which we do not like. Then the day comes when He does something that we really do not like—something that completely violates who we think God should be. Now we feel greatly betrayed and betrayal leads to feelings of hate. If God really loves us, why would He treat us like this? We feel there is no reasonable answer to this question.

To understand why God intentionally shatters our trust in Him at certain points in our walk, we need to start with the fact that God is not a human being. When you relate to a human, you are relating to a creature who is your equal. If they seem to have power over you because they are your parent or pastor or some other authority figure, their power is very limited, and their superior rank is based on temporary things which could change at any moment. The balance of power is never a fixed thing in human relationships. The dominant person could suddenly be forced into a submissive role at any time. Humans are never secure in power positions. We automatically assume God is not entirely secure in His, either. We think He can be dominated by Satan or overwhelmed by our sins. The popular theory that God has no relationship with evil is

based on the assumption that He is a limited Being. Yet He is not limited, He is unlimited, and this really changes the dynamic of the relationship.¹

Finding scriptures for my theological foundation paper after communicating with my colleagues Psalm 13 is going to serve as the Old Testament scripture and John 10:1-18 will serve as the New Testament scripture. Understanding that the Bible provides many examples of issues such as abandonment and neglect. The argument can be made that the Bible is aimed at addressing various issues confronting humankind of all generations. The meaning of the Bible must be understood before the message of the day can be accepted. Gaining an understanding of the historical perspective of the Bible is relevant for current day application. Without hermeneutics (the science and art of interpreting the Bible) an indispensable step in Bible study will be missed. The first step, observation, asks, what does it say? The second step, interpretation, asks the question, what does it mean? The third step, application, raises the question, how does it apply to me? Since God is the divine Author of the Book, it is totally unique. It is one of a kind.

The Bible is not simply a book with man's thoughts about God, though it includes them. It is also God's thoughts about God and man. The Bible reports what God did and communicates what He is and what He desires. The Bible is also unique in that it was written by God and man. Human authors wrote as they were guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). This fact of dual authorship poses problems. How could God use people of differing personalities to record the scriptures and yet have the final product be the work

¹ Anna Diehl, "The Pursuit of God, Serious topics for serious Christians," Word Press, July 5, 2014, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://924jeremiah.wordpress.com/2014/07/05/the-benefits-of-betrayal-how-god-uses-traumatic-experiences-to-strengthen-our-bond-with-him/#more-51521>.

of the Holy Spirit? How does this affect the individual authors' own personalities and writing styles?²

Psalm Thirteen was selected because it is a cry at the center of which is a plea: "Notice me! Answer me!" (v. 3). The plea is addressed to the Lord, the Creator of heaven, earth and of Israel. The psalm is language in which the desperate loneliness of human life is offered to God who is its ultimate source and only final help. It is a prayer in which mortals in anxiety and anguish speak of themselves to God and in doing so speak about God to those of us who read the prayer as scripture. Though it is the shortest of the prayers for salvation in the Book of Psalms, it comprehends their essential elements so completely that to know it is to have an introduction to the others.³ This Psalm records the cry of the afflicted and therefore harmonizes with several of the preceding Psalms. Here David rested confidently on the loyal love of the Lord, even though he found no immediate deliverance from the oppression of the adversary, God's enemy. In a series of rhetorical questions designed to motivate God to answer his prayer, David asked God how long He would wait before answering. David felt ignored by God and forgotten. Would this continue indefinitely? Wrestling inwardly, David lamented that he spent every day in this distressing situation, that his heart was filled with struggles and sorrow. Since David was apparently forsaken by God, his enemies triumphed over him. David called on the Lord to look for answers and rescue him from his situation. Give light to my eyes was David's way of requesting divine wisdom or perspective on his

² D. K. Campbell, in the foreword of *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991), 18.

³ James Luther Mays, "Psalm 13," *Interpretation* 34, no. 3 (1980): 279-283, accessed February 2, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

need. He earnestly prayed this lest he sleep in death, this bringing triumphant joy to his enemy. David expressed his trust in the Lord's unfailing love, the loyal love the Lord has for those who trust in Him. The enemies of David were challenging the faithfulness of God's love to one of his covenant believers. The Psalmist, assured that his prayer had been heard, resolved to rejoice and sing to the Lord for giving him salvation and for dealing bountifully with him. He fully anticipated the end of his long wait.⁴

Old Testament

To establish the foundational scriptural passages for this ministry project Psalm Thirteen has been selected for my Old Testament scripture, which states:

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him," and my foes will rejoice when I fall. But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the LORD's praise, for he has been good to me.⁵

This scripture was appropriate because of personal reflections of abandonment as a child. There were times in David's life when he felt like his trials and difficulties would never end, as if God was absent and had left him to his own resources. So here in Psalm 13, he asked God how long He would forget him. It is of course a silly thing to ask God, since He never forgets anything, but still sometimes we must remind ourselves that God never says, "Sorry, what was your name again?" Someone suggested that a great title for this

⁴ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 1985), 801-802.

⁵ Biblical citations within this document are from the New Revised Standard Version unless stated otherwise.

Psalm could be “Are we there yet?” When our kids were little, and we went on vacation that was the kind of question we usually heard from the back of the car: “How much longer?” or “Are we ever going to get there?” Those kinds of questions never came when the kids were having a fun time. It’s the same for us as adults. When times are easy, and things are going great, we never ask God, “How much longer is this going to last?” But when times are rough, it appears time itself slows down and we begin to wonder if the difficulty will ever end. This is a psalm for the impatient, for when we are saying, “I don’t get it Lord. I’m trying to follow you.” We understand that because we all live in a sin-marred world, sooner or later we will find ourselves in the midst of circumstances that bring pain, perhaps even despair and disillusionment.

What does God want us to do when the pressure is on? Pray, give it to Him, and move on. When we are going through difficult storms, we need to keep our eyes on God’s power to act on our behalf. We must remind ourselves that His power is always greater than our need and that we can praise Him during the storm. By the end of this short psalm, although David wasn’t out of the storm yet, he went ahead and started praising God. We should do the same when we find ourselves in storms and growing impatient for God to move.⁶

This Psalm has a series of repetitious statements such as: “How long?” David asks how long God will forget, how long God will hide His face, how long must he wrestle with his thoughts and sorrows, and how long will his enemies triumph. Four times David cries out to the Lord, “How long?” We are left with the understanding that whatever David is crying out about has been going on for quite a long time. The length of David’s

⁶ Ed Rea, “How Long, O Lord? Will You Forget Me Forever?” Packinghouse Redlands, April 15, 2014, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://packinghouserelands.org/devotional/?p=7800>.

suffering has been so long that David asks if God is going to forget him forever. These words are reflective of any Christian in times of despair when it is difficult to even remember when better times existed. The feelings of loss and abandonment are so great that one is unable to see when the end will come. It is important to recognize that this is the nature of trials. Very rarely are Christians able to see when the trial will end. Even worse, we are unable to see what the outcome will be from the trial. This is the type of emotion upon which David expresses these words. When we consider the life of David, being a man after God's own heart, it is easy to only recall the positive things that happened in David's life. Yet the suffering, trials, and traumas that David endured cannot be forgotten. He lost a son because of his sins. He was chased for his life by Saul and by his own son Absalom. Things were not all "good times" in the life of David. David became a man after God's own heart, in part, because of how he handled the suffering and trials he encountered. Therefore, though one of the spiritual heroes of the Old Testament, David is in agony when he cries out, "Will you forget me forever?"

Not only is David dealing with the feeling of abandonment toward God, but he is also wrestling with his own flood of emotions. David says that he wrestles with his thoughts and has sorrow in his heart every day. David simply describes the depths of his despair. David declares to the Lord that his emotions were eating him up inside. David is fighting the negative thoughts that are in his mind. How many times we must wrestle with our emotions when we are suffering or during trials! Our minds may tell us to give up, to give in, and tell us things that are not truthful. This battle has already been expressed by David. David knows that God has not left him, which is noted later in the Psalm. There is a battle being waged with what David knows to be accurate and what he

feels. David feels abandoned by God and out of His favor. Therefore, David is wrestling with what he knows versus these feelings because of the suffering he is enduring. David describes the depths of his despair even further when he points out that he feels sorrow in his heart every day. The suffering is so significant that every day that goes by he feels the weight and burden of sorrows in his heart. David is standing in the valley of despair, looking for a way up and out. Let us not downplay the great sorrow he feels.⁷

If David was born in 1040 BC, the youngest son of Jesse, the one who had a great relationship with God, the young shepherd boy who slew a giant with one stone and a simple sling shot, the one that grew up to be the great king of Israel and was also the man after God's own Heart could feel abandoned and neglected then this could be the scripture that could help build the biblical foundation. David was anointed as a boy to be God's chosen King by the prophet Samuel and the Holy Spirit remained with him for the rest of his life. This scripture assures Christians that during abandonment God will never leave us.

In Psalm 13:1-2, the author cries out to God four times with the question of "how long" will this misery continue? How long must the author endure God's forgetfulness, God hiding his face, a personal wrestling match with sorrow, and defeat by one's enemies? These verses describe someone in the pit of despondency. The author of this Psalm is anguishing "Will this never end?" "I don't think I can bear any more of this mess!" "God, where are you?" These are serious questions deserving serious answers. Sometimes the trite reply just is not enough! When is the last time you traveled with

⁷ Brent Kercheville, "Psalm 13: How Long, How Long? Feeling Abandoned," West Palm Beach Church of God in Christ, January 2006, accessed January 31, 2017, http://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/psalms/psalms_13.html.

small children? The recurring question, "Are we there yet?" is a staple conversation for any family on a trip. In a real sense, the author of this Psalm is questioning God in much the same way, "Aren't we done with this lesson yet?" Many in today's world are struggling with these same questions, God what is going on? Psalm 13:3 expresses two genuine requests offered to God. Please listen, Lord God, and answer my prayers. Make my eyes sparkle again, ... The first request, "listen and answer me," is a plea for God to take notice of this servant. How many times have we felt like our prayers never make it beyond the ceiling? The second request is a plea for genuine understanding. This phrase can also be translated as "give light to my eyes." This rendering focuses the request as a need for illumination and understanding. The author is calling out to God to hear the request and bring insight and understanding to the situation.⁸

God had promised David the throne of Israel, yet that day of coronation seemed further and further away. Saul was doing evil things, and God was not judging him, and yet David was doing good things and felt abandoned by the Lord. David was certainly disturbed by what the enemy was doing, but he was more concerned about what the Lord was not doing. "How long?" is a familiar question in scripture and is a perfectly good question to ask if your heart is right with God. The saints in heaven even ask it. When we are in trouble and pray for help, but none comes, we tend to feel deserted. David felt that God was ignoring him, and that this alienation was final and complete. He also felt that God was hiding His face from him instead of smiling upon him. To behold God's face by faith and see His glory was always an encouragement to David, but now he felt abandoned.

⁸ H. Wayne Ballard Jr., "This Too Shall Pass!" *Review and Expositor* 96, no. 4 (1999): 593-596, accessed January 31, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

Feeling like he was left to himself, David tried to devise various ways to overcome the enemy, but nothing seemed to satisfy him. However, faith is living without scheming; it means not leaning on our own experiences and skills and trying to plot our own schedule. There were storm clouds in the sky, hiding the sun, but the sun was still shining. It is a dangerous thing to give in to our feelings, because feelings are deceptive and undependable. When Jacob heard the news about Simeon being left hostage in Egypt, he gave up and announced that everything was against him when God was causing everything to work for him. Feelings cannot be denied and pretending that everything is going well, and there is no sin in asking, “How long?” At the same time, feelings are deceptive, and God is greater than our hearts and can lift us above the emotional storms of life. David eventually learned to replace the question “How long, O Lord?” with the affirmation, “My times are in your hands.” This is a lesson that all believers must learn.⁹

The Psalm begins with the complaint, which consists of four basic questions addressed to God. Each of these questions begins with the words how long, which are often used in the complaint section of lament Psalms. When complaining about the distress which is present, the psalmist bemoans the fact that the distress has lasted too long. Claus Westermann has noted that the basic lament usually contains three primary dimensions: the complaint is usually directed against God, against the general situation of the psalmist and against the enemy. These three dimensions are not always obvious, and they do not occur in every lament psalm. In Psalm Thirteen, however, these dimensions are present as the Psalmist accuses God of abandonment, bewails the pain, which is present in heart and soul, and complains against the prevailing of the enemy. What is

⁹ W. W. Wiersbe, *Be Worshipful* (Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Communications Ministries, 2004), 55-56.

striking about these three specific complaints in this Psalm is that the lament against God is uttered first. There is no attempt to soften the approach by initially complaining about the general situation or the enemy. The Psalm includes no introduction and no formal address but immediately launches into a complaint against God. The complaint is harsh, provocative, aggressive, and confrontational. By beginning the Psalm in this aggressive manner, the Psalmist attempts to make God aware of the seriousness of the situation in such a way that God will want to respond. The complaint thus serves to garner God's attention and prepares the way for the petition which immediately follows.¹⁰

This Psalm is classified as a lament Psalm and a biblical lament cries out to God. This is not an internally focused process of grieving, it is first and foremost a prayer, a conversation. When we further consider the God to whom we cry, this aspect of a lament Psalm, brief as it may be ("My God, my God"; Ps. 22) takes on even greater significance. We cry to an omnipotent God, a good and merciful God, a just God, a God who grants us access to himself and invites us into personal relationship with him.

A lament honestly and specifically names a situation or circumstance that is painful, wrong, or unjust—in other words, a circumstance that does not align with God's character and therefore does not make sense within God's kingdom. The emotional tone of the complaint varies, depending on the type of lament Psalm. It may express sorrow, remorse, weariness, anger, disappointment, or doubt. A lament expects a response or an answer. It expects that God will be able to do something about the situation. Most often the request sounds like a demand: it is the Psalmist's essential heart-rending cry, "God, do something!" A lament generally includes an explicit expression of trust, sometimes

¹⁰ David A. Leister, "The Rhetoric of Praise in the Lament Psalm," *Brethren Life and Thought* 40, no. 1 (1995): 44-48, accessed January 31, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

woven through the complaint and request, and other times concluding the Psalm with an almost jarring note of praise.¹¹

When this congregation of people went through the period of feeling that God had abandoned them they began to grieve or lament. Arriving at Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church one of the members said to “I asked God, how long would it be before He sent us a Pastor that cared about us.” The pain that they were going through was obvious and just as David did they began to ask Lord how long? David asked this question no less than four times and it shows an intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart but it is very important that for Christians to wait on God they must keep from indulging in a murmuring spirit. This was a very critical question for David because he felt that all his suffering would be over if he only knew when God was going to deliver him from the hands of his enemies.

The Bible records in Psalm the Thirteenth chapter David does this in three stages. First, in verses one through two, he states the emotions he is feeling. He feels abandoned. He feels alone, and he lets God know that point blank. Second David begins demanding that if God does not do something, then he will die. Behind all this are the promises which God has made to David which seem to have been broken at this time in David's life. Third, David waits in faith, having stated his case and got it off his chest. He recalls God's faithfulness in his past and trusts in that as a trend for the future.¹²

¹¹ Stacey Gleddiesmith, “Psalms: My God, My God, Why?” Reformed Worship, accessed January 30, 2017, <http://www.reformedworship.org/article/june-2010/my-god-my-god-why>.

¹² Glen E. Harris, "A Wounded Warrior Looks at Psalm 13," *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling (Online)* 64, no. 4 (2010): accessed January 30, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

It seemed as if God had forgotten David, had hidden Himself from him, and as if it would last forever. It always seems as if a time of intense trial lasts forever? The hard thing about waiting is that you must wait! Waiting is especially hard if you do not have much to do while you wait. If this Psalm was written when David was being pursued by Saul; then David had a lot of time on his hands. He was holed up out in the desolate wilderness of Judah. About all he and his men had to do was to get their daily provisions and keep watch. The hours, days, weeks, and months dragged on as David waited for God to act.

Sometimes it seems as if God moves so slowly! The current culture says, “Hurry, hurry, hurry!” But so often God says, “Wait! Wait! Wait!” Most of us can relate to a comment by the New England preacher, Phillips Brooks. Normally, he was a calm man but one day he was clearly agitated. He paced the floor like a caged lion. A friend asked him, “What’s the trouble?” Brooks replied, “The trouble is, I’m in a hurry, but God isn’t.”

Have you ever noticed the difference between God’s timetable and yours? Humanity think in terms of minutes, hours, and days, but God works in terms of years. Do you remember the story of Joseph? God wanted him in a position of influence in Egypt. How did He get Joseph there? First, he had him sold into slavery by his brothers when he was a teenager. He was hauled off to a foreign land. Then, he had him falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife and thrown into prison. A long time went by. Don’t you suppose that Joseph was praying fervently, “God, get me out of here?” But God didn’t seem to hear.

Finally, an opportunity came to interpret the dreams of a couple of fellow inmates. To the one man, the king's cupbearer, who would be released from prison and restored to his job, Joseph pled, "Remember me and get me out of here!" The cupbearer assured him that he would--but he forgot! The next verse (Gen. 41:1) casually reads, "Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream" Two years! Think back to two years ago in your life. For two more years Joseph languished in prison. God could have given Pharaoh his dream sooner. Why the long wait? As it was, Joseph spent the better part of his twenties either as a slave or in prison in Egypt.¹³

How long, O Jehovah? It is very true that David was so greatly hated by the generality of people, because of the calumnies and false reports which had been circulated against him, that almost all men judged that God was not less hostile to him than Saul and his other enemies. Here he speaks not so much according to the opinion of others, as according to the feeling of his own mind, when he complains of being neglected by God. Not that the persuasion of the truth of God's promises was extinguished in his heart, or that he did not repose himself on his grace; but when weighed down by calamities for a long time, and when signs of divine aid are not perceived, this thought unavoidably forces itself upon the mentality of man, that God has forgotten about them. To acknowledge during afflictions that God really cares is not the usual way with men, or what the feelings of nature would prompt; but by faith His invisible providence is apprehended. Thus, it seemed to David, so far as could be judged from beholding the actual state of his affairs, that he was forsaken of God. At the same time, however, the eyes of his mind, guided by the light of faith, penetrated even to the

¹³ Steven J. Cole, "Psalm 13: When God Seems Distant," Bible.org, accessed January 30, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/psalm-13-when-god-seems-distant>.

grace of God, although it was hidden in darkness. When he saw not a single ray of good hope to whatever quarter he turned, so far as human reason could judge, constrained by grief, he cries out that God did not regard him; and yet by this very complaint he gives evidence that faith enabled him to rise higher, and to conclude, contrary to the judgment of the flesh, that his welfare was secure in the hand of God. Had it been otherwise, how could he direct his groaning and prayers to him? Following this example, Christians must wrestle against temptations as to be assured by faith, even in the very midst of the conflict, that the calamities which urges one to despair must be overcome; the infirmity of the flesh could not hinder David from seeking God, and having recourse to him: and thus he has united in his exercise, very beautifully, affections which are apparently contrary to each other. The words, how long, forever? are a defective form of expression; but they are much more emphatic than if he had put the question according to the usual mode of speaking, Why for so long a time? By speaking this, he provides the understanding that for the purpose of cherishing his hope, and encouraging himself in the exercise of patience, he extended his view to a distance. Therefore, he does not complain of a calamity of a few days' duration, as the effeminate and the cowardly are accustomed to do, who see only what is before their feet, and immediately succumb at the first assault. He teaches, therefore, by his example, to stretch our view as far as possible into the future, that our present grief may not entirely deprive us of hope.¹⁴

The Old Testament Psalms are not just poetry; they are Hebrew poetry. It has a unique style and structure of its own, very different from the poetry of the current time. While there are various types of Psalms in the Psalter and great diversity among the

¹⁴ J. Calvin and J. Anderson, "*Commentary on the Book of Psalms*," vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software), 181-183, accessed February 13, 2017.

Psalms, all have several characteristics in common. Hebrew poetry is very different—so different that the translators of the King James Version possibly did not recognize it as such.

In Hebrew poetry, it is not the rhyming nor the rhythm of the words, but the relationship of two lines (most often) of poetry, which is the heart of the poetic style. This relationship is most frequently referred to as parallelism, although stereo vision and stereo sound have been used as illustrative analogies. Using various types of parallelism, the first line of poetry is expanded upon in the second, either by clarification, completion, or contrast.

Since the Psalms are poetry, it should not be approached in the same manner as a prose. Figures of speech and interpret expressions are evaluated in the Psalms in the light of their literary use. If a Psalm is a poem, it is also a song. The Book of Psalms, while it is many things, is a hymnal. The various titles of the Book of Psalms are one indication of the role of the book as a hymnal. In the Hebrew Bible, the title of the Psalms is *Tehillim*, which means “songs of praise.”¹⁵

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible displays a heading that reads “Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies.” If Psalms means “songs of praise” David was praising God for even being in the presence of his enemies because he said in Psalm 23:5 that God prepared a table in the presence of his enemies. David felt as though he had gone through long enough and it was time for God to deliver him from the hands of his enemies, but he felt that God was nowhere around. God where are you is the cry of many Christians. When in the presence of my enemies and it seems as if God has turned His

¹⁵ Bob Deffinbaugh, “What Is a Psalm?” Bible.org, accessed, January 31, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-what-psalm>.

back, it is imperative to keep on trusting in Him and know that He loves with His unfailing love, and that He will never leave nor, will he forget, even though it may seem that way.

The Bible records in Psalm 13:6, “I will sing the LORD’s praise, for he has been good to me.” After David went through and after feeling that God had abandoned him he was now able to sing praises to the Lord. The member of Spottswood was going through a series of abandonment and neglect because they felt as though the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church had forgotten about them because they were isolated from other A.M.E. Zion Churches. The Spottswood church can be like David and sing praises to the Lord knowing that the Lord has been good to them. The Bible records in First Corinthians 2:9 “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Spottswood loves the Lord and they are excited about the growth that is taking place.

New Testament

The New Testament scripture selected to help build the biblical foundation is John 10:1-18.

I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn’t understand what he meant, so he explained it to them: “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did

not listen to them. Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep. A hired hand will run when he sees a wolf coming. He will abandon the sheep because they don't belong to him and he isn't their shepherd. And so, the wolf attacks them and scatters the flock. The hired hand runs away because he's working only for the money and doesn't care about the sheep. "I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd. "The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."¹⁶

While examining this scripture, there were several verses that are noteworthy. In John chapter ten, our Lord identifies Himself as the "Good Shepherd," contrasting Himself with those shepherds of Israel who are rebuked by the Lord in Ezekiel. Ezekiel indicates the wicked "shepherds of Israel" who care for themselves at the expense of the flock. They prey upon the sheep rather than protecting them from predators. They feed and clothe themselves at the expense of the flock, yet they do nothing to minister to the needs of the sickly or injured among the flock (Ezekiel 34:3-4). It is not difficult to see that Jesus looks upon the Pharisees before Him as the kind of shepherds Ezekiel condemned. Our Lord describes a typical pastoral scene that is familiar to all in His audience. Many of the Israelites were sheep herders. In any city or village, there would be several flocks of sheep. For convenience, they would all be herded into a common sheepfold, a simple enclosure where the sheep could be contained, while thieves and predators would be forbidden access. There would be but one door, one access through which the sheep

¹⁶ Tyndale, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

would enter and exit. Through this same door the various shepherds would enter to gather their flocks. Early in the morning, the shepherd arrives at the sheepfold and enters to lead his flock out to pasture. Then, at the end of the day, he brings his sheep into the sheepfold for safekeeping through the night. One person is assigned as the doorkeeper. Perhaps this duty is shared among the shepherds on a rotating basis. The doorkeeper stations himself in the doorway, keeping the sheep safely inside and any danger to the sheep outside. In the morning, each shepherd reports to the doorkeeper, who recognizes him and lets him into the sheepfold. Once inside the fold, each shepherd calls out his own sheep and leads them outside the fold. Knowing the voice of their shepherd, the sheep of each flock go to their own shepherd when called by name, and then they follow him outside the sheepfold, only to be brought safely back to the fold in the evening.¹⁷

Mentioning the Good Shepherd helps the reader understand the importance and the significance of taking care of the people of God. Jesus, therefore, in v. 11 claims to be the Good Shepherd because He possesses the mark of the Good Shepherd, as v. 12 states corroboratively. For a characteristic quality of a good shepherd consists in this that he is not afraid to give his life for his sheep. The object of this statement is to underscore heavily the freedom of will with which life is sacrificed. The hireling, on the contrary, on seeing the wolf approaching, thinks first of himself and his own safety and not of the deliverance of the sheep entrusted to his care. He provides for his own security first by fleeing. The flock which is now helplessly delivered to the rapacity of its enemy is left to its fate. Any sheep that are not slain or carried off as prey run away from another in mortal dread and are scattered. The reason for the hireling's conduct is to be sought in the

¹⁷ Bob Deffinbaugh, "The Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)," Bible.org, accessed February 4, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/23-good-shepherd-john-101-18>.

fact that he is a hireling, devoid of personal interest, of heart and love for his flock. For it is not his personal property which is endangered. The description of the hireling and his behavior, which is the logical consequence of his character as a hireling, is of no independent significance in this connection; it merely serves to delineate the Good Shepherd more effectively.¹⁸

In Ezekiel the thirty-fourth chapter, the prophet Ezekiel exploits the shepherding metaphor in a shocking way: The shepherds are feeding themselves and not the sheep. Pointing to the failure of the shepherd leaders of Israel Ezekiel exploits the shepherding metaphor in a shocking way: The shepherds are feeding themselves and not the sheep. Pointing to the failure of the shepherd leaders of Israel he notes, the word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy, and say to them even to the shepherds, thus says the Lord God: 'Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep.'" The second issue that God has with the shepherd leaders is that they do not seek lost sheep, making them vulnerable for the prey.

You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat ones, but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So, they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered; they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth; with none to search or seek for them. Finally, the gravity of their poor leadership is summed up in the fact that instead of protecting the sheep, and feeding the sheep, they eat the sheep.¹⁹

¹⁸ Johannes Quasten, "The Parable of the Good Shepherd: Jn. 10:1-21," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (1948): 151-169, accessed April 4, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁹ Steven W. Smith, "Jesus Christ: The Good to Great Shepherd," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 56, no. 1 (2013): 53-63, accessed February 4, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

Michael J. Gorman quotes in his book *Elements of Biblical Exegesis* “As you execute and complete your first readings of the text and its contexts, you will begin to formulate some initial impressions of its meaning. Ask yourself, “What is the topic of this text? What perspective on the topic does it offer? What role might it play in the book as a whole?”²⁰ At this point, answering such questions is often little more than educated guesswork but it is an important first step in the process of exegesis.

Reading this text and reading Gorman, helps to form the biblical foundation because the topic of this text is the Good Shepherd and after going through abandonment through life and being placed at a church that has experienced some of the same things that hindered life is a mind-blowing experience. What does it mean to be good? Do the things Christians do in life make them good, how they treat their family does that make them good? If paying bills on time and have good credit does that make them good? Does living in a certain type of house or community or driving a certain type of car does these things make them good. The answer to these things is not at all. However, what makes people good it the fact that they have the proper relationship with God and the willingness to shepherd a congregation that have been hurt, broken and misguided for many years to the point that they wanted to leave the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Many left the church and started another church because they could not be a member of a church that did not have a good shepherd. Jesus underscored these aspects of God’s love for the people. He emphasized God’s desire to save them from their

²⁰ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 61.

misdeeds and to establish a peaceful divine reign that would put all other rulers and temporal powers to shame.²¹

The image of the shepherd is an extremely important biblical picture of a “leader” because it implies not only an intensely personal relationship between God’s people and their leaders, but a style or model of leadership exemplified by Jesus. The very word “leadership” is developed from the shepherd imagery, where the shepherd goes before the flock and encounters the problems of the flock first. The shepherd does not issue commands in a pyramid fashion down to subordinates who carry out his wishes like a general or admiral who stays back out of range of the conflict; nor is a shepherd a whip-carrying organizer who drives the sheep into the pen or to a pasture. However, the shepherd knows the setting, leads the sheep, and they follow him. Sometimes “leaders” today are like the strangers of this text, whose voices are unknown to the sheep, and they wonder why there are problems in their organizations!²²

One of the great images of Jesus is as the “Good Shepherd.” First, He is the gate to the sheep pen, meaning that no one can enter the fold through any other means than Jesus Himself. Only through Jesus Christ can anyone be made right with God leading to eternal life. Second, Jesus leads His sheep. No other voice is the true voice of leadership. Third, as the Good Shepherd, Jesus protects His flock—even to the point of death. Unlike someone who watches sheep for employment, Jesus is a Shepherd motivated by love for His sheep.

²¹ William C. Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

²² G. L. Borchert, *The New American Commentary: John 1-11*, vol. 25A (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1996), 332.

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus mentioned that there are other sheep that will listen to His voice and will one day be brought into the fold. More than likely what is in view are the Gentiles who would come to believe in Christ. The idea is not many shepherds with many flocks, but one Shepherd joined together as one flock (Eph. 2:16). Jesus was not forced into being the Good Shepherd; He willingly took the role upon Himself, and for this He is loved by God.²³

This project will be a guide for Spottswood and assure them that even with the constant change of leadership they should always feel that they have a Shepherd. Leaders are frontline individuals. They are industry risk takers, trailblazers, revolutionaries, and agents of change. They are thinkers, tinkerers, inventors, and innovators.²⁴ The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is a part of the Itinerate Ministry and for them to understand that the problem does not come from the A.M.E. Zion Church, but the main problem comes when there is not good leadership. As a pastor in the A.M.E. Zion Church many changes can be suggested as it relates to being in Itinerate Ministry. A Shepherd is one thing, but a Good Shepherd is of another class. The imagery of a shepherd and his flock thus provided a picture of the way God cared for His people, and thus this imagery also serves as a model for human leaders. God cares for His people as a shepherd cares for his flock. Human leaders are likewise to rule over men as a shepherd tends his flock. It can safely be inferred that God prepared Moses to lead the Israelites by first having him

²³ J. E. White, *J. E. Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. D. S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998), 478.

²⁴ Cindy Trimm, *The Prosperous Soul: Your Journey to a Richer Soul* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc. 2015).

serve as a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years (Ex. 2 and 3). God likewise prepared David for leadership by his experience as a shepherd in the days of his youth.²⁵

Military personnel must play the role of the sheep and follow the voice of those that are in leadership. We cannot be in the Kingdom of God and continue to live the way we used to live. When His Kingdom takes over our lives, everything changes.²⁶ This project will help guide as well direct the membership to be good leaders and followers. John the tenth chapter is a very good model what could help demonstrate the need to follow leadership and how important it is to hear the shepherd's voice. The good thing now is that Spottswood has grown into becoming a church that value leadership. This project will enhance the leadership role and guide members through the hurt of never having to feel abandoned again. The biblical image of a leader is not of a cowboy, after all, but of a shepherd. Cowboys drive and push their herds from behind. Shepherds lead their flocks from the front.

The Bible, in fact, is full of shepherd imagery — both describing how God leads and cares for us, and how pastors are to lead and care for others in God's flock. God the Father is portrayed as a shepherd in Psalm 23. In Luke 15:1-7 Jesus compares himself to a shepherd who goes after lost sheep. In John 21:15-17 Jesus tells Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep" and "Feed my sheep." God's leaders are called shepherds in the New Testament as well as the Old: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of

²⁵ Bob Deffinbaugh, "The Good Shepherd and the Flock of God," Bible.org, accessed February 9, 2017, <https://bible.org/seriespage/4-good-shepherd-and-flock-god>.

²⁶ Myles Munroe, *God's Big Idea: Reclaiming God's Original Purpose for Your Life* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2008).

God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28) and “I will give [Israel] shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding” (Jeremiah 3:15). And if you are a leader, you are a shepherd in God’s kingdom, too.²⁷

The main idea of John the tenth chapter is the utter dependence of the flock on the person, voice and work of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. His unique and exclusive position is insisted upon even at the price of a certain inconsistency of imagery, which is of course not uncommon in the Fourth Gospel. He is the rightful shepherd who comes to the sheep not surreptitiously but by the door, which has been opened for him by the gatekeeper. This means that Jesus is the legitimate Redeemer of the true people of God, fully authorized to be their only leader and Lord. Unexpectedly enough He is at the same time designated as the sole door by which the sheep enter the saving fold and find pasture. He is the only means by which anybody can become a participant of the true people of God. The exclusive position of the Good Shepherd is emphasized by the contrast to his dark counterparts, the thieves and robbers and hirelings. Various explanations have been offered. Some, starting with the apparent continuity of John the tenth chapter with chapter nine, maintains that the thieves and robbers are to be identified with the Pharisees and other Jews who not only had no help to offer the blind man but even cast him out when he refused to renounce Jesus who helped him.²⁸

In conclusion Psalm the thirteenth chapter has provided a foundation for the project from the Old Testament because it gives the demonstration of how David experienced hurt after feeling that God had abandoned him. The complicated question: till when, how long ... forever (74:10; 79:5; 89:47), is the expression of a complicated condition of soul, in which, as Luther briefly and forcibly describes

²⁷ Dennis Anderson, “Imitating the Good Shepherd,” Student Soul, accessed February 13, 2017, <https://studentsoul.intervarsity.org/imitate-shepherd-intro>.

²⁸ Josef Bohumil Souček, "The Good Shepherd and His Flock," *The Ecumenical Review* 9, no. 2 (1957): 143-153; accessed February 13, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

it, amidst the feeling of anguish under divine wrath “hope itself despairs and despair nevertheless begins to hope.” The self-contradiction of the question is to be explained by the conflict which is going on within between the flesh and the spirit. The dejected heart thinks: God has forgotten me forever. But the spirit, which thrusts away this thought, changes it into a question which sets upon it the mark of a mere appearance not a reality: how long shall it seem as though Thou forgettest me forever? It is in the nature of the divine wrath, that the feeling of it is always accompanied by an impression that it will last forever; and consequently, it becomes a foretaste of hell itself. But faith holds fast the love that is behind the wrath; it sees in the display of anger only a self-masking of the loving countenance of the God of love, and longs for the time when this loving countenance shall be again unveiled to it. Thrice does David send forth this cry of faith out of the inmost depths of his spirit.²⁹

It is very true that David was so greatly hated by the generality of people, on account of the calumnies and false reports which had been circulated against him, that almost all men judged that God was not less hostile to him than Saul and his other enemies. But here he speaks not so much according to the opinion of others, as according to the feeling of his own mind, when he complains of being neglected by God. Not that the persuasion of the truth of God’s promises was extinguished in his heart, or that he did not repose himself on his grace; but when we are for a long time weighed down by calamities, and when we do not perceive any sign of divine aid, this thought unavoidably forces itself upon us, that God has forgotten humanity. To acknowledge during afflictions that God really cares, is not the usual way with men, or what the feelings of nature would prompt, but by faith His invisible providence is apprehend. Thus, it seemed to David, so far as could be judged from beholding the actual state of his affairs, that he was forsaken of God. At the same time, however, the eyes of his mind, guided by the light of faith, penetrated even to the grace of God, although it was hidden in darkness. When he saw not a single ray of good hope to whatever quarter he turned, so far as human reason could

²⁹ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 5 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 123.

judge, constrained by grief, he cries out that God did not regard him; and yet by this very complaint he gives evidence that faith enabled him to rise higher, and to conclude, contrary to the judgment of the flesh, that his welfare was secure in the hand of God.³⁰

John the tenth chapter gives a good foundation from the New Testament because it portrays a Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep and how he will not abandon the sheep in time of despair. A good shepherd is one who is with the sheep seven days a week, thirty days a month and twelve months in a year in imitation of Christ the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep accompanies them, leads them, loves them and laid down His life for them. Therefore, for priests to be Christ's visible signs and living instruments on earth, they must foster a spirituality or an asceticism worthy of shepherds of God's family. That is why the Decree on Ministry and Life of Priests refers to them as "Pastors of Souls."³¹ The document emphasizes further that, as shepherds, priests ought to realize the need for them to acquire holiness by performing their pastoral duties sincerely and tirelessly in the spirit of love and service. Christ, the Good Shepherd, who has mandated them to continue His mission in the world will accompany them until the end, in fulfilment of His promise, "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." Priesthood is a gift from God. It is neither a right nor a way of raising one's social status. A priest does not belong to himself, his family or a selected group of people, but to all, especially those directly entrusted to him by the bishop (parish, school, hospital, prison, seminary or military). He has been called to be a visible and living sign of the Good

³⁰ J. Calvin and J. Anderson, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 181-182, accessed February 13, 2017.

³¹ Patrick Mwololo Maliti, "Priesthood: A Call to Imitate Christ, The Good Shepherd," *Afer* 39, no. 2 (1997): 87-93, accessed April 4, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

Shepherd to them. He is, therefore, expected to demonstrate in word and deed the way Christ, the Good Shepherd loves and cares for His flock. This was Mother Teresa of Calcutta's message when she addressed 6,000 priests from all over the world who were attending a retreat in Rome in 1984. She challenged them as follows, "Priests of God, priests of God, Love Jesus and Give Him to us." Her words echo those of St. Augustine of Hippo, "Love and do what you want." God, who is Love itself, invites those He calls to the priestly vocation to be signs of His Son, Jesus Christ, to all those they minister to.³²

This warning has been highly useful in all ages, and in the present day it is especially necessary. No plague is more destructive to the church, than when wolves ravage under the garb of shepherds. It is also known how grievous an offence it is, when bastard or degenerate Israelites pretend to be the sons of the church, and, on this pretense, insult believers. In the present day, there is nothing by which weak and ignorant persons are more alarmed, than when they see the sanctuary of God occupied by the greatest enemies of the church. It is not easy to make them understand, that it is the doctrine of Christ which the shepherds of the church so fiercely resist. Besides, as the greater part of men are led into various errors by false doctrines, while the views and expectations of each person are directed to others, scarcely any person permits himself to be conducted into the right path.³³

Christians must therefore, above all things, guard against being deceived by pretended shepherds or counterfeit sheep, if we do not choose, of our own accord, to expose ourselves to wolves and thieves. The name of "The Church" is highly honorable, and justly so; but the greater the reverence which it deserves, so much the more careful and attentive ought we to be in marking the distinction

³² Maliti. "Priesthood," accessed April 4, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

³³ J. Calvin and W. Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. 1 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 394-395, accessed February 13, 2017.

between true and false doctrine. Christ here declares openly, that we ought not to reckon as shepherds all who boast of being such, and that we ought not to reckon as sheep all who boast of outward marks. He speaks of the Jewish Church, but what he says applies equally well to our own. We ought also to consider his purpose and design, that weak consciences may not be alarmed or discouraged, when they perceive that they who rule in the church, instead of pastors or shepherds, are hostile or opposed to the Gospel; and that they may not turn aside from the faith, because they have few fellow-disciples, in listening to Christ, among those who are called Christians.³⁴

If anyone understood sheep, it was David. He spent his formative years out in the open Judean pastureland shepherding his family's flocks. His experience taught him that sheep was prone to wander and were stubborn at times. He knew their needs and their weaknesses; he was aware of their vulnerability to the heat and dust storms, to snakes and wild animals. David knew that sheep needed guidance and protection, a shepherding voice that reassured them and led them to safety. They needed a shepherd who would find lush green grass they could eat and would search for still water they could drink. The sheep would then finally lie down and rest, secure with the shepherd, who took care of all their needs.

David's shepherding prepared him for kingship. It also gave him a picture of his own journey and relationship with God. This picture carried him through his years on the run from Saul and through the magnificent highs and significant lows of his kingship. Hundreds of years later, this talking sheep is the voice behind the Bible's most famous psalm, providing reassurance and comfort for generations of people. In our magnificent highs and our significant lows, the Lord is our shepherd. He sees us, he knows us. He feeds and nurtures us. He leads us forward.³⁵

³⁴ Calvin and Pringle, *Commentary on the Gospel*, 394-395.

³⁵ Joe Saxton, "The Good Shepherd, Psalm 23," Christianity Today, May 11, 2016, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.todaychristianwoman.com/articles/2016/may-11/good-shepherd.html>.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

This historical foundation chapter will explain why The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church has experienced much backlash because of its Itinerancy. The American Methodist Church's deployment of itinerant pastors has been and continues to be one of the most definitive aspects of the denomination's identity and ecclesial praxis.

Traveling from place to place to begin Methodist societies in principle led to the itinerant system The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church uses today. "Itinerancy" refers specifically to the commitment by pastors to go and serve wherever their bishops send them. "Appointment" is the action taken by bishops. These are different yet related. Clergy in The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church agree to serve where their bishop appoints them. Appointments are for one year at a time. For elders and local pastors, particularly, the goal is to match the gifts and graces of the pastor with the ministry needs of a particular congregation.

To fully understand and capture the meaning and significance of Itinerant Ministry let's first understand the history of Methodism in which the Itinerant Ministry was born. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, preached up to 40,000 sermons in his lifetime. He was an "itinerant" preacher, traveling from town to town in England, setting up Methodist societies.

Methodism was introduced into America by Irish immigrants who had been converted by John Wesley. Wesley also sent preachers, the most successful of whom was Francis Asbury a blacksmith, who arrived in 1771. He adapted Wesley's principles to the needs of the settled communities and of the frontier, but, unlike Wesley, Asbury supported the American Revolution and the new republic. Despite this difference, Wesley sent the presbyters he ordained along with Thomas Coke as superintendent to help Asbury in 1784. In the same year, The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized, and Asbury and Coke allowed themselves to be called bishops. During the next fifty years, the church made remarkable advances led by the circuit riders who preached to the people on the frontier in simple terms. At the same time, the church faced schism over issues of race and slavery.

Dennis Campbell defines itinerancy as “the practice of moving pastors, through appointment, to specific places where their services are needed and can be best used.”¹ Many churches have suffered due to pastors being appointed to a church for only one year at a time and is subject to being moved before that year is up.

The 2012 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Book of Discipline states that a bishop shall appoint pastors upon the consideration of their abilities, training and experiences. An appointment shall be valid until the convening of the next Annual Conference and can only be changed by the mutual consent of the bishop and the pastor or for either judicial causes and or the immediate good of the congregation as expressed in writing by the board of stewards. Pastors shall be appointed to charges by the bishop

¹ Dennis M. Campbell, “Ministry and Itinerancy in Methodism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, eds. William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 274.

for one year at a time but may be allowed to remain in their charges for as long as the bishop deems appropriate.²

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is “Methodist” in that the church derived from Methodist roots and follows the Methodist doctrine, worship, and spirituality. It is “Episcopal” in that church leadership is structured per Episcopal structure—that is, the church is governed by bishops who oversee a hierarchy of other leaders.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church started out as “African” because it was founded by people of African descent. Today there are many whites, Hispanics and other nationalities in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Many blacks desired to enter into full fellowship with Methodist churches but often experienced discrimination. In 1796 a group of blacks at the John Street Methodist Church in New York City were discriminated against. They left to form a new church, which also pulled people of African descent from other Methodist churches. This newly formed church was still part of the Methodist denomination and was at first called “African Chapel” but later called “Zion.” By 1800, the congregation was able to build their own building. It was the only African-American church in New York City at the time.

The church became discouraged with the continued discriminatory practices of the Methodist Episcopal denomination in 1820 and withdrew from that organization, forming the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Conference. This new denomination began to incorporate religious expression that was more appealing to black

² African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church*, 2012.

congregations, and affiliate churches began to spring up. The original church in New York is still known as the Mother Church.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion and the African Methodist Episcopal churches were formed because of this racial prejudice that was experienced by African Americans in the Methodist Episcopal Church. The slavery issue split the Methodist Church into two bodies: the Methodist Episcopal church and the Methodist Episcopal Church, south. A third church formed because of the slavery question, the all-African American Colored (now “Christian”) Methodist Episcopal church, split from the southern Methodist church. After the Civil War the two main churches grew rapidly and gradually became assimilated to the general pattern of American Protestantism. When it was clear that the old issues no longer divided them, they began to move together. It was not until 1939 that they formed the Methodist Church, which the smaller Methodist Protestant Church also joined.³

In the rise of Methodism, John Wesley himself has listed four stages of development. The first is Biblical, or that period having to do with the Holy Club at Oxford, the second is brotherly; the third, doctrinal; and the fourth, organic. The last stage began on Monday, May 1, 1739. The days intervening between John Wesley’s conversion and the date of the birth of a separate organization are both dramatic and fascinating. In them the trend of this great leader’s preaching led to the closing of the Established Church to this handful of devout men who went about crying for the repentance of the people.⁴

For fear that many may misinterpret the intention of Wesley, may we state that at no time did the founder of Methodism contemplate separation from the Mother Church. He

³ Rupert E. Davies, “Methodism Religion,” Britannica, January 15, 2016, accessed April 30, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Methodism>.

⁴ David Henry Bradley Sr., *History of the A. M. E. Zion Church* (Nashville, TN: The Parthenon Press, 1956), accessed May 11, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/historyofamezion00brad/historyofamezion00brad_djvu.txt.

distinctly felt that the calling of his group, himself, Whitfield and others, was to purify the church, not to destroy it. It is a current belief that Wesley, in organizing Methodism, was unwilling to consider this a new denomination. After his death, the drift away from the Mother Church became a fact.

For five years, John Wesley and other leaders of the movement traveled throughout England. In that time, forty-five preachers, three or four of them clergymen of the Established Church, gathered around him. In that time the church became a church without a name. Sacraments were observed, fellowship and church government practiced, pastors were in evidence, but the belief of the head that no new denomination was intended was ever paramount.

Methodism originally was a zealous evangelistic movement that heralded a simple gospel for the common man, championed an evangelical Arminian theology of salvation, pioneered an approach to evangelical sanctification known as Christian “perfection,” and motivated thousands of ministers who selflessly embraced an itinerant, “circuit riding” ministry that often included celibacy and poverty for the cause of Christ. The movement cooled in the 19th century as Methodists established colleges, seminaries, and moved more into mainstream evangelicalism. Today the United Methodist Church ranks as the third largest single denomination in America (after Roman Catholicism and the Southern Baptist Convention). No history of Methodism can begin without reference to John Wesley (1703-1791). As a 35-year-old Anglican minister and former Greek tutor at Oxford University, Wesley underwent a profound conversion to Christ and thereafter committed himself to preaching the gospel wherever he could.⁵

This first conference of Methodism considered three things; what to teach, how to teach and how to regulate doctrine, discipline, and practice. For two days, they talked about “Such vital doctrines as the Fall, the Work of Christ, Justification, Regeneration, Sanctification.” Hurst says, that the answer to the question, “How to Teach” was

⁵ Robert Caldwell, “Methodism: John Wesley’s Plan to Bring Christ’s Holiness to the World,” January 30, 2014, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://theologicalmatters.com/2014/01/30/methodism-john-wesleys-plan-to-bring-christs-holiness-to-the-world/>.

fourfold: to invite, to convince, to offer Christ, and to build up. Preachers were instructed to do this in every sermon.

Regarding the Established Church, it was agreed to obey the Bishops “in all things indifferent.” They were convinced that the new group at no time would leave the Mother Church unless forced out and all would work against the things which might bring this about.⁶

An “itinerant” travels from place to place without a home. Stereotypes are demeaning: drifters, hobos, vagrants, bums, squatters, tramps, and carnies. Some are neutral, but few are positive, and yet there are some who voluntarily embrace itineracy for the sake of the gospel, including circuit riders, pilgrims, and wandering monks.

Despite being known as homeless and raggedy, it was the traveling missionaries who enabled the church to accelerate its mission into new territories. Extraordinary itinerants such as Methodist circuit-riders, tent-revivalists, and the Celtic traveled all over to preach.

Itinerancy is more effective in both cost and time, having no house to maintain or return to. Our apostolic efforts are not tempted by the idolatry of building our own empire because next week we will be somewhere else, serving another ministry project, but it is more than that. As itinerants, dependence on others for their participation becomes a filter that leads to the right people at the right time, as Jesus outlines in Luke the tenth chapter. We depend on God. We depend on God’s family. We even depend on the people we are sent to.

⁶ Bradley, *History of the A. M. E.*, accessed April 29, 2017, https://archive.org/stream/historyofamezion00brad/historyofamezion00brad_djvu.txt.

Like Abraham, we are told to go but not given a destination. We find ourselves in intimate company with the people of faith, who viewed the heavenly city as their real home. We have no house, but we enjoy a hundred houses in this life and the benefits of a large and diverse spiritual family. We drink deeply of the sufferings of Christ who, having no place to lay His head, walked the same path we tread. Recent years have seen a more positive spin on the mobile lifestyle. As in Antioch, there are still Christians of export quality being sent out on itinerant journeys that are initiated by God, modeled by Christ, led by the Spirit, and given enthusiastic thumbs-up by the church.⁷

The idea behind the itinerant system is found in the father of Methodism, John Wesley. Due to John Wesley's fervor and his religious views, he suffered a great deal of antagonism and rejection. He was disallowed from speaking in many venues and began the practice of traveling with his message. This was the sprout which would grow into itinerancy. He soon realized his own limitations and enlisted the help of assistants. He used lay preachers to help in his mission. Great Britain was geographically divided into "circuits" which his lay preachers would be responsible for. These circuits were often so large that a preacher returned to a specific place about once every four weeks. In addition, the preachers would be rotated out of one circuit and into another annually. This gave rise to the name by which Methodist Pastors are still know, "circuit riders."

Itinerancy was adopted in America in the late 1760's and was made the cornerstone of its organizational system by the first American Methodist Episcopal

⁷ Ed Stetzer, "Itinerant Ministry: A Closer Look," Christianity Today, last modified April 3, 2013, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/april/itinerant-ministry-closer-look.html>.

Bishop Francis Asbury. In its early years' circuits, could cover up to 800 miles and the pastor might only return every six to eight weeks.⁸

The mobility of the itinerant (circuit riders) preachers, especially in the colonies, was key to the growth of the Methodist movement in America. The circuit riders were robust, fervent young men who travelled many, many miles on horseback to various geographical areas in order to help establish chapels, organize Methodist societies, and preach to as many people as possible. Other denominations at the time established churches in one particular location and ministered to the people within reach of the church. Methodists, on the other hand, ebbed and flowed with the ever expanding American Frontier. Methodists had little concern for parish boundaries and as a result preached in open air revivals and often in settlements that had not yet been reached by other denominations. This commitment to versatility helped the Methodist movement grow rapidly with the also rapidly growing America. Richter provides statistical support for this growth, noting that within 30 years, Methodist saw a jump in membership "from 4921 members in 1776 to 130,570 in 1806."⁹

James Varick, the founder and first Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, occupies a peculiar place in the history of the Negro race in America. Destined by Providence...he was to lead a few devout men and women out of the John Street Methodist Church, New York City, to establish an independent local church for members of his race, which local church soon leaped the bounds of localism to be formed into a denomination, which has grown to be one of the great religious bodies of the world. Beginning with these few members, not more than two or three dozen, it now numbers its members by the hundreds of thousands and is an important factor in the prosecution of the work of the Christian religion among the inhabitants of the earth.

Varick was first privileged to exhort and then licensed to preach by the Quarterly Conference of the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Because of racial

⁸ Nolan B. Harmon, *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1974), 1242-1243.

⁹ Philip Richter, "Do Moving Ministers Move Congregations? Rational Choice Theory and Methodist Ministerial Itinerancy," *Religion* 32 (2002): 40.

discrimination Varick held separate religious meetings for his people. In 1796 about thirty Negroes, under the leadership of James Varick, withdrew from the John Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and formed the first colored church of New York.

In the early two days of Methodism, in both England and America, local preachers were a mighty power in the church. The great revival under Wesley was affected mainly by local preachers. Methodism in this country was planted by local preachers. They were the pioneers of our church in every state and almost every neighborhood. In the poor and neglected districts of cities, in out-of-the way villages, on the frontiers of advancing civilization, they were generally the first to preach a full salvation for all, and in most cases, they preceded the regular itinerant in the formation of societies. They were esteemed and honored by the bishop and traveling preachers.¹⁰

The John Street congregation licensed local African preachers but beyond that nothing was done, and by 1800, there were only three “colored” preachers and one exhorter in New York. These local preachers were James Varick, Abraham Thompson, and June Scott. Thomas Miller was the exhorter. These ministers could not perform all the services required, and the African members in this movement were thus deprived of some of the church’s most sacred rites such as Baptism and Holy Communion. These were basic causes for dissatisfaction, being bound by restrictions under which the Africans were compelled to conduct their spiritual activities. Spiritual contradictions were pushing out through the growing boldness of the Free African Society.

Varick knew that no church could survive without leadership and no congregation would have to suffer or worry about being abandoned. When one pastor leaves another in

¹⁰ William J. Walls, “The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Reality of the Black Church,” (Charlotte, NC: A.M.E. Zion Publishing House, 1974), 86-87.

appointed. There are some positive things about the itinerant ministry and some negative things. Back in the 1800's and early into the 1900's it was not unusual for a pastor or preacher to be itinerant. Itinerant meant that they lived in one city and did ministry in another or they were a circuit preacher preaching in numerous churches on a rotational cycle. With so many churches being extremely small and unable to afford a pastor all their own, sharing was a must. So, the itinerant pastor traveled between locations, most often by horse and much later by car.

Itinerant ministry can provide some benefits and challenges. First, there can be a benefit to having some space between you and your people. Especially in the smaller community, pastors can feel as if they are always “on” whether at a restaurant, the grocery store or even driving from place to place. Over time, this amplifies the glass-house syndrome. Secondly, itinerant ministry demands the pastor/minister and the church select only the most important of ministry tasks. When you do not live in the city, you have to come and go, which demands everyone to be selective and prioritize what is going to happen and what is going to be dismissed.

Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Silas, Peter, Mark, and many other people mentioned in the New Testament were itinerant at least for a while. Itinerant, in this sense, means that they moved around from place to place proclaiming the gospel and strengthening churches. Itinerant also means that they did not intend to stay in one place permanently. Sometimes they stayed in one place a few days; sometimes a few weeks; sometimes a few months; sometimes even a few years. But, the intention was always to keep moving, as long as they considered themselves itinerant.¹¹

These New Testament apostles are clearly itinerant. They did not provide day-to-day pastoral support for a congregation over the long-term. Rather, they travelled from place

¹¹ Alan Knox, “Thinking About Itinerant Servants and the Church,” May 5, 2011, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.alanknox.net/2011/05/thinking-about-itinerant-servants-and-the-church/>.

to place, starting new Christian communities and providing encouragement and support for existing communities.

It is possible to build great relationships in itinerant ministry, but they will not be as strong as other types of connection. If the pastor lived more than an hour away people viewed him or her as an outsider. No conversations at Starbucks. No conversations in the Walmart parking lot. No seeing each other at the Christmas parade. Just as space can be a benefit in preventing the glass-house syndrome, space can also be a huge disadvantage in that you are too far away to be completely available for non-calendared meetings.¹²

The itinerant form of leadership can hurt a church because as the church starts to grow and the members start to trust suddenly the pastors are moved to a new place. The reason for replacement is because leadership is needed somewhere else. Bishop Varick knew that these kinds of decisions would have to be made so that the churches would grow but, on the other hand he understood that there would be people hurt because of the moves. Whether sitting in the pew or standing in the pulpit each Sunday, the appointment process is important to Methodists. Churches grow to love their pastors and pastors grow to love their churches. It is a very special relationship.

From the very beginning of this Methodist movement, ministers have been appointed and sent forth to serve. Many congregations trace their history back to those early days. Francis Asbury traveled through this territory and preached in the churches more than 200 years ago. Methodists were at work long before there was independence in the United States of America.

¹² Shane Garrison, "Pros and Cons of Itinerant Ministry," Shane Garrison: A Fellow Traveler in God's Kingdom, last modified February 16, 2012, accessed April 30, 2017, <https://shanegarrison.org/2012/02/16/pros-and-cons-of-itinerant-ministry/>.

Although many things have evolved in the assignments of ministers to local churches rather than to large circuits in those earliest times, one thing has remained the same. It is and has always been about mission. Those entrusted with the task have been sending preachers to places in the hope that they will establish and build up the body of Christ.¹³

The marriage between pastor and congregation can become a beautiful celebration of harmony, like a finely tuned orchestra. The pastor and the church's leadership are on the same proverbial page; the worship service is exquisite, and the various programs run like a clock. The congregation is growing spiritually and numerically, and the community is envious of that body of believers.

Okay, that is utopian, at minimum, it is rare. Often, churches are content with the status quo, preaching is good, the church leadership gets along well with each other, and the church continues to produce the usual menu of discipleship programs. When a church becomes vacant – that is, without a pastor – it becomes an opportunity to find that perfect match between pastor and congregation. How do we connect the right pastor with the right congregation?

Today, each church reflects its unique culture, specific focus and liturgical quirks. Ministers come from a variety of backgrounds and enter a church with a wide range of theological training. Some may be second-career pastors after having served a time in business. Many enter the ministry through non-traditional educational paths: a few years at a Bible college, a few courses at a neighborhood theological seminary that may not

¹³ Mary Virginia Taylor, "Matching Pastors, Local Churches," South Carolina United Methodist Advocate, last modified February 24, 2012, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.advocatesc.org/2012/02/matching-pastors-local-churches/>.

reflect a Reformed perspective, and then a requisite year at the denominational seminary, often via distance education.¹⁴

Before any estimations can be made concerning this itinerancy we must consider the fact that John Wesley was a noted theologian and that he was prepared for this journey. Many have said that they would not like to be in the Methodist church because “the pastor is moved all the time.” That is a false statement because there are many pastors that have been at their churches for many of years.

Many congregations feel abandoned because they do not understand the Itinerant Ministry. Proper teaching about itinerancy would solve many problems in churches. Many times, it may not be a good fit for the pastor and the congregation and if the church is not growing then there should be a change. People are often misinformed because they think that the bishop is moving the pastor because he does not like the pastor or that he or she has a personal vendetta with them.

We must not become so complacent knowing that at any time our gifts will take us to different churches. In the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, clergy appointments are made annually by the bishop, who has the responsibility for setting all the pastoral appointments in the conference. This unique system of assigning clergy dates to John Wesley. This is not the type of system where the church “calls” or “hires” its pastor.

Pastors also can indicate whether they wish to stay at their current appointments, wish to move to another appointment, or have no preference. However, they are not

¹⁴ Sam Samstra, “Pastors and Congregations,” Chapter Next: Helping Congregations Turn the Page, last modified March 25, 2014, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://chapter-next.com/pastors-and-congregations-mariages-made-in-heaven/>.

assured that they will get their first choice. Pastors in The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church agree to serve where sent and to accept and abide by the appointments.

The bishop and the cabinet (all district Presiding Elders in the conference) look at appointment needs throughout the conference, taking into consideration the needs of each church, the gifts and talents of each pastor, and other circumstances in the conference. They then determine the appointments for each church in the conference. One of the pressing question is: How shall the idle preachers be given employment, and how shall all the vacant pulpits be supplied and kept supplied with ministers, and, further, how can this be done in the most prompt and effective way? In some denominations, such as the Baptist Church must secure its own pastor and the minister himself must find his own place to live. Even with this there continue to be very many vacant churches and many unemployed ministers. In other denominations, there is a power above the local church and the individual preacher to which the church and the minister look in the matter of effecting or dissolving a pastoral relation.

Another method is to have the minister assigned and moved by a central authority, with pastoral adjustments presumably for a year at a time, but which may be continued from year to year indefinitely or up to a certain limit, as the law of the denomination may provide. This is the itinerant appointive system of pastoral supply and change which is in use in many denominations and in many different countries.

Pastoral supply and change is found in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Great Britain and the various Methodist churches elsewhere in the British Empire. In the United States of America, it is found in the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in the other Methodist Episcopal Churches (white and colored), Methodist

Protestant Church, United Brethren Churches, Evangelical Association, United Evangelical Church, and in various bodies too numerous to mention in this preface, some of which bear and some of which do not bear the Methodist title.

In this system are about fifty thousand itinerant preachers, and under this system are eight to nine million of communicant members, and about twenty-four million of adherents closely attached to the different denominations having the appointive system. This it is wide-spread and in many lands and has been thoroughly tested in many parts of the world and among diverse peoples during a long period of time, which may in round numbers be called one hundred and seventy-five years.

All these classes of ministers, members, and adherents are very directly concerned in this system and in its proper working and should study existing conditions and consider the possible or probable outcome of certain tendencies if they are continued.¹⁵ The questions then become: would the abandonment of the Itinerant Ministry be better for the church? Could we improve the system so that the lay persons and the ministers adjust the pastoral assignments among themselves? We could modify the present system so that all ministers and churches could arrange for themselves and yet retain the present itinerant system with the appointing power. However, two contradictory methods cannot work together, oil and water will not mix, and we can only believe and implement one method and discard the other.

Suppose the churches could get rid of the pastor at its pleasure and get any one it pleased, and then the preacher could leave the charge when he or she got ready and still have the liberty to seek another church, would this solve the problem in the local church

¹⁵ Thomas B. Neely, *The Minister in the Itinerant System* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1914), 5-7.

about pastoral abandonment? The church must uphold the dignity of the ministry, must preserve the minister's self-respecting spirit, and must permit him to have a certain freedom of action.

The minister should not feel and must not be made to feel that they must obey the will of a certain person, or of a few individuals in the local church, or else get out, but they should feel and be made to feel that they are supported by a mighty system that will sustain and maintain them if they properly conduct themselves according to the Discipline of the Church and performs good works as a preacher and pastor. This does not mean that the preacher is always going to receive the church of their choice. The intelligent and fair-minded minister does not expect the system to do that under all circumstances, but he expects equitable treatment.

The preacher must not be regarded as a hireling, to be employed and discharged at the pleasure of a few in the local church. He is more than a soldier ready to obey orders and to sacrifice himself for a cause. He is a Man of God, called of God to preach the Word of God, and a minister of our Lord Jesus Christ to minister in holy things, ready to sacrifice himself in Christ's cause, but not to be sacrificed by an unthinking or unfeeling few who have no right, either moral or legal, to sacrifice him. The pastor must receive proper consideration in the matter of appointments, and in the appointment, the pastor must receive proper treatment, or both churches and pastors will suffer most severely.¹⁶

The Itinerant system have worked since the days of Wesley and it is still going strong. Every system has flaws, and everyone will not like everything but if one has grown up in the Methodist system they must be true to what Methodism stands for and

¹⁶ Neely, *The Minister in the Itinerant System*, 140-141.

what it means. Methodist must take seriously their ecclesiology and theological inheritance which values relationship. Methodist must value the rich history and embrace the blessings that have come from the appointment system that presently exist.

The word itinerancy is the one word that often hangs people up when they are appointed to be a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Things like being called by God, ministerial gifts and Wesleyan Theology are often not the issues with most people but when the word itinerancy is mention it can become a stumbling block, especially for those with young families or those who are starting a family. The idea of moving from place to place at the power and authority of another human being, the bishop, can be frustrating.

It is not easy to say to the bishop “No, I do not want to go.” You have told the bishop during ordination that “I will go where ever I am sent, with a glad heart.” It is extremely difficult. Having to pack everything up and transport it to one place to another. Relocation is only the beginning. The hard and most hurting part is having to leave the people that you have grown to love and established relationships. The church is growing, relationships have been established, children are in school and have made new and exciting friends, spouse is working and enjoying their job and the friends they have made, people in the neighborhood and community have grown to love you and look forward to seeing you often and suddenly it is time to move to another city or even state.

Most times the congregation are not the ones who suffers from the moving, but it is the family of the pastor who have just felt like they have been hit with a sledge hammer. “What, we must move again?” or “I am tired of moving!” is the cry. It is good

to have a good family support from the spouse and children knowing that you are an itinerant minister and you can be moved at any time.

There comes a point in time when the reality adds up to mediocrity and a person's portfolio of ministry simply falls short of everyone's expectations. They did good things, people's lives were touched, but they either did not light up the scoreboard or outkicked their coverage. Maybe they could thrive in a greater work, but the facts seem to dictate that they would be better off serving a lesser one. Since gauging what is greater and lesser is often theologically and empirically impossible, maybe they need to do something entirely different with their life. What if a lot of our mediocrity in the pew and the pulpit is due to people's high expectations and low performance? What if our clergy problem is because people went searching for God by going to seminary and came out with a degree in hand and ended up looking for a career? We must recapture the theology and language of call over career. It is believed that most clergy feel called, however, for many the call has dissipated into a career. The church is in a hurting world to dither between play acting as either church members or as clergy. It is time to get real! Church members who do not take discipleship seriously should NOT serve as church council members. Put those nominal Christians and a pastor who is career minded together and the certain result is a lack of fruitfulness.¹⁷

John Wesley sincerely believed that a primary genius of the Methodist Movement was itineration. Clergy were not to become "settled" as they routinely were in the Anglican Church of his day. In his mind, it was better for clergy to be constantly on the go in outreach

¹⁷ "A Potters View: Selective Hearing and Appointment Making," Word Press, last modified February 21, 2014, accessed May 1, 2017, <https://wtmcclendon.wordpress.com/tag/itinerancy/>.

to the world. The United Methodist Church continues to call clergy and laity alike to have a vibrant responsive ministry to our contextual realities!

Over the years more and more clergy have stayed longer in places. This can be a great thing if clergy and churches are continually creating new ways to minister to people. If churches and clergy are going through the motions, then it is not.

The problems that arise from the itinerant system are not new, but the effects are perhaps more profoundly felt currently. William B. Oden suggests that the question at hand is not whether to do away with the system, but that the vitality of the system needs to be “redeemed and renewed.”¹⁸

This is a tremendously complex situation. Itinerancy and appointment have contributed to the growth of the denomination at different times in history. It is not all bad but there is certainly a lot to be said about areas where improvement and reform are desperately needed. In an essay about the abolition of the appointment system within the Korean Methodist Church, Rev. Joon Kwan Un acknowledged that the future of the Methodist Church depends first and foremost on “the formation and up building of a ‘communitas’ of faith and service where a ‘quality of relatedness’ may be experienced between God and people, people and people, and the people and the world.”¹⁹

The Itinerancy can hurt churches because the congregation feel that they are being abandoned and that no pastor wants to stay with them. Many times, God send the church a good pastor and he or she is the right fit and because they have been hurt so many times

¹⁸ William B. Oden, “Without Reserve: A Critical Appreciation of Itineracy,” in *Send Me? The Itinerancy in Crisis*, ed. Donald E. Messer (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 56.

¹⁹ Joon Kwan Un, “When Korea Abolished Guaranteed Appointments,” in *Send Me? The Itinerancy in Crisis*, ed. Donald E. Messer (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 46.

they are blind and cannot see what God is doing. Itinerancy can be a good thing because if the pastors are not a good fit and they cannot establish relationship with the people instead of the pastor making themselves miserable and the congregation miserable it is good that you can move on. No congregation should have to feel like they are being abandoned. Pastors come, and they go. That is the beauty of Methodism and that is why every pastor should teach their congregations about the itinerant ministry as to why they may have to move. For every pastor, it is good to know that the church cares for the congregants and they want the pastor to stay but some churches are lacking the proper leadership and pastors can be the one that can give them that leadership that they need to grow and become successful.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Today, many congregations in the Methodist Church feel the hurt of abandonment due to Itinerant Ministry. Many churches cannot and will not grow since people are afraid to join Methodist churches knowing that the pastor could be moved. “Where is God in all of this?” God strengthen us for the journey. Once we put our hands to the plow, there is no looking back. If more focus was on the theological foundation rather than people’s feelings, people would be excited to hear the Word of God no matter was preaching.

Theology seems to be a word today that communicates arrogance, bigotry and riddled with impracticality. People do not want theology pushed upon them. Theology is an attempt to understand God as He is revealed in the Bible. No theology will ever fully explain God and His ways because God is infinitely and eternally higher than humanity. Therefore, any attempt to describe Him will fall short. However, God does want us to know Him insofar as we are able, and theology is the art and science of knowing what we can know and understand about God in an organized and understandable manner. Some people try to avoid theology because they believe it is divisive. Properly understood, though, theology is uniting. Proper, theology is a good thing; it is the teaching of God’s Word.

Theology is defined most simply as the study of God. It comes from the word *theos* which is Greek for “God,” and *-ology* which is from the Greek word *logos* meaning “word.” Most literally then the word theology means “words about God”

or “the study of God.” If one were to use the term generically, it functions much like “philosophy” or “worldview.” People often use the word this way in secular venues. Many times it is used very specifically, speaking only about God. This is called “theology *proper*,” but generally speaking theology is a belief system that is built upon intellectually and emotionally held commitments concerning God and man.¹

People of faith frequently experience issues of abandonment in diverse ways. Many times, these issues can be seen to fuel deeper devotions and faith commitments in ways that nothing else could. Conversely, they can just as well erode faith sometimes because of unrealized expectations. Therefore, people of faith, including Christians, often need to have a subjective theological understanding of their issues as they seek the intervention of God who is always present and heals their wounds.

This is probably important mainly in the way it helps believers cope with the various challenges they face, but it can also be a way of advancing and preserving some of the most critical tenets of their faith. Considering this, the way a Christian understands his or her issues largely determines his or her ability to be open to the ways in which God can intervene during their situation.

The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is a part of Wesleyan Theology. Wesleyan Theology is Christian theology that takes its cues from the teachings of John Wesley. John Wesley was a clergyman of the Church of England, who led a religious renewal movement that came to be known as “Methodism.” At its heart, the theology of John Wesley stressed the life of Christian holiness: to love God with all of one’s heart, mind, soul and strength and to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Wesley’s teaching also

¹ Michael Patton, “What is Theology?” Bible.Org, last modified August 22, 2005, accessed May 2, 2017, <https://bible.org/article/what-theology>.

stressed experienced religion and moral responsibility. Wesley organized his followers into small groups, which met for prayer and study and spiritual accountability.

While John Wesley never intended to separate from the Church of England, the Methodist movement soon began to take on a life of its own, and the Methodist churches in North America and England were soon formed. The Methodist movement has had vast influence and many other Christian denominations have grown out of it (either directly or indirectly) including the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, Church of the Nazarene, and many other Holiness and Pentecostal churches. Wesley introduced us to the Wesleyan movement. The itinerant ministry is a crucial part of the Wesleyan movement. The research project seeks answers as to why members of an itinerant church would feel abandoned due to the consent movement of pastors, which lead to pastoral theology.

So, what are the theological themes? Human beings have always tried to decipher the puzzling fragments of life. This fact is not just a matter of theologians, priests or pastors, it is a matter of performing a critical theological reflection overall pastoral praxis of the church. Very often pastoral theology is equated by historical practice and is overly influenced by psychological theory and practice rather than drawn from the lived experience of the church. Competent pastors have always recognized a strong point between what Christians faith confesses about God, that is redemption through Jesus Christ, and the life of sanctification, and the care of God's people.

Human beings are called to wait for God from within infinite barrenness and void of their own spiritual selves. They open themselves to God in silence by hearing his

Word and addressing each one of them personally. Human beings must learn to listen and hear the language of God first before they can speak or preach it. Turning their whole hearts to prayer human beings must diligently seek God.

Contact with God must be practiced; otherwise we can never find the right tone, the right word, the right language when God surprises us. We must learn the language of God, laboriously learn that language; we must work so that we, too, can speak with God. None of us is so rushed that we cannot find ten minutes a day during the morning or evening to be silent, to focus on eternity alone, allow eternity to speak, to query it concerning ourselves, and in the process look deeply into ourselves and far beyond ourselves. It's always difficult at the beginning, and any one who embarks on such an undertaking will feel rather funny, indeed perhaps quite empty the first few times. Before long, however, the soul is tilled; it begins to come alive and feel stronger, experiencing the eternal silence residing in God's love, and the distress and worries, restlessness and haste, noise and commotion, tears and anxiety all are hushed within it., and it becomes silent before God.²

Pastoral theology, for decades has been regaining its theological roots at the level of deep foundational assumptions and practice. Pastoral theology has begun to realize the importance of reflecting on the church as she is built up daily by the power of the Holy Spirit as a living sign of salvation through Jesus Christ. We cannot neglect Pastoral theology because of its fundamental importance and relevance to both the church and society. Pastoral Theology bridges the gap between the church and society. This is done by providing care for the individual through personal experiences and by making meaningful contributions to the development of human beings, not neglecting their salvation and temporal good. Pastoral Theology minister to the needs of suffering of human beings. It's bringing together of cognate and theological resources helps deepen the understanding and shape the mission of the church. It also forces the church to respond and attend to the healing and care of the suffering.

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Sermon on Psalm 62:2," in *Barcelona, Berlin, New York, 1928-1931* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2008), 504.

Pastoral theology is concerned both with the theory and with the practice of Christian ministry, because right practice proceeds from right belief. For example, if you believed that the only qualifications needed for ministry were appropriate spiritual gifts, you probably would not want to study at all! However, it is clear from scripture that gifting, and training belong together, as happened to the apostles during three years of teaching from Jesus; and to Paul when, after his conversion, he spent three years out of the public eye before beginning his work as the apostle to the Gentiles. Spiritual gifts are divinely given but it takes careful thought and study to know *how they should be used*. Pastoral Theology is that study. Jesus referred to himself as “the Good Shepherd,” and to those who followed him, as his “sheep,” so the terminology of Pastor is founded on the words of Christ. This term refers to the work and concern of the shepherd for his sheep.

The Pastoral Epistles, in which First and Second Timothy and Titus presents a series of practical directives for the proper pastoral care of the Christian communities at Ephesus and Crete. “Pastoral theology” is a practical science which includes everything connected with the priestly ministry to the faithful. It also tries to apply the revealed truths of our faith, and the directives to the problems of daily living. Per this understanding, the pastoral priest, is a practical man who helps and instructs his people to live a fully Christian life so that they can attain eternal salvation.

Jesus is the Supreme Shepherd of the flock (Church) who has a threefold office: prophet (teacher), priest (sanctifier) and king (ruler). Traditionally, the duties of a pastor have been enumerated in terms of those three functions: (1) to instruct the faithful in the truths of revelation and Christian doctrine; (2) to sanctify the people by administering the sacraments; and, (3) to rule, or lead, them in things pertaining to faith and the Church.³

³ Kenneth Baker, “What Does it Mean to be ‘Pastoral?’” HRP, last modified November 26, 2012, accessed May 14, 2017, <http://www.hprweb.com/2012/11/editorial-what-does-it-mean-to-be-pastoral/>.

The pastor's duties are only begun when he has cared for all the sheep of his own fold. He is Christ's special representative on earth to entreat men to be reconciled to God. He is the ambassador of the King to show the world His glory and lead men to be His subjects. The pastor must get ready. He must realize the greatness of his responsibility as a leader. He must get an estimate of the unsaved in the vicinity and get these lost souls on his hearts. He must by self-surrender, prayer, and faith, be filled with the Holy Spirit and willing to undertake any- thing honorable to win souls and make the revival a success. If revivals fail it is often because the pastor's failure to make the necessary personal preparation in himself.⁴

One of the things the pastor brings to the congregation is an understanding of how the Spirit leads the people in their journey. We have described the congregation and individuals as pilgrims on a spiritual pilgrimage; sojourners on their way to the Presence that calls them onward. For each congregation. Indeed, for each individual, the journey takes its own twists and turns, for the call and the presence relate to each congregation, and each person, for what they are, unique and special to God.⁵

The calling and profession of the clergyman demand eminent spirituality. The minister is one of the most known and sacred men in society. This hits the nail on the head, except we would not use the word “profession.” The minister's office is not a profession. There are four special reasons for demanding the highest spiritual life for the pastor: First, a pastor's calling should be divine and sacred. His or her calling should be

⁴ B. H. Carroll, “The Pastor and His Relation to the World,” *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 247-265, accessed May 3, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

⁵ Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving the People* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 127.

direct from God through the Holy Spirit. Second, a pastor should live the life that exemplify his or her walk with God. The nature of his duties should reflect that he or she was called by God. Third, the church expects the pastor to lead others to Christ. The church usually never rises higher than that of the pastor just as water never rises above its source. A great church with well-trained spiritual leaders will navigate through the storms. Fourth, pastors are rigorously judged by the world and the demands of him are very high in the religious life, the pastor must strive to live to say with Paul, “Be ye followers of me” (1 Cor. 11:1). Or again with Paul, “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you” (1 Thess. 2:1).⁶

Pastoral theology is that branch of Christian theology that deals with the office and functions of the pastor. It is theology because it treats the consequences of God’s self-disclosure in history. It is pastoral because it deals with those consequences as they pertain to the roles, tasks, duties, and work of the pastor.

Pastoral theology is a special form of practical theology because it focuses on the practice of ministry, with attention to the systematic definition of the pastoral office and its function. Pastoral theology is also a form of systematic theology, because it attempts a systematic, consistent reflection on the offices and gifts of ministry, and their integral relationship with the tasks of ministry. Pastoral theology is distinguishable, yet inseparable, from exegesis, historical and systematic theology, ethics, liturgics, and psychology of religion. Even though it interweaves insights from all these disciplines into

⁶ B. H. Carroll, "The Twentieth-Century Pastor; or Lectures on Pastoral Theology Part One the Pastor in His Private Life," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 58, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 191-210, accessed May 2, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

its understanding of the practice of ministry, it deserves to be viewed as a distinctive discipline.⁷

The term pastoral is derived from the Latin word 'Pastor,' meaning, shepherd, and it thus suggests the work of a shepherd in relation to the care giving to his sheep. Pastoral theology is the science of the care of souls. It begins with situations of human beings particularly that of suffering and tries to bring together cognate and theological resources to deepen the understanding and shape our mission to care to respond and attend to the healing and care of this suffering.

Pastoral theology addresses the difficulties of individuals, families and larger societal issues that contribute to the Christian growth in faith and leads to salvation. Thus, pastoral theology is not easily defined, but rather described and this allows for a fluid and open approach to a theology that has roots in the experiences contained within and outside of its distinct boundaries.

Pastoral theology is that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry, which brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.

Pastoral theology is an operation-centered or function-centered theology, which begins with a situation of suffering and need. It attends to theological questions raised by the practice of care in response to that need, and it brings theological as well as similar contemporary knowledge into this question to care in response to the needs. The situation and need are the concrete situation of Christians living as the body of Christ.

⁷ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology, Essentials of Ministry* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1983), 10.

For most people, pastoral theology is simply a technique of doing ministry. For some the techniques had to do more with manners than with the practice of care, that is, proper dress and appropriate behavior rather than the care or cure for the parishioner.

Today however, pastoral theology has taken a wider scope.

Pastoral theology is the branch of theology that is concerned with the basic principles, theories, and practices of the caring and counselling of ministry. It includes a study of the methods of care and healing as well as moral and religious life and development, personality theory, interpersonal and family relationships, and specific problems such as illness, grief and guilt.⁸

In its complex identity and debated meaning, the field of pastoral theology has its nature rooted in the theology of shepherding. From the Shepherd stems the priestly pastoral ministry. The shepherds who are entrusted with the pastoral care of His flock (John 21: 15). Therefore, pastoral theology is the branch of theology, which shows pastoral responsibilities for others, in families, at work, in church, in school, etc. In other words, we may say that pastoral theology is about theological reflections that guide pastoral care. It is about individual and corporate well-being. Although the metaphor of pastor as shepherd may be used in relationship to all functions of the church, the aspect of caring for suffering congregational bodies is central to this application of Seward Hiltner's understanding of pastoral theology.⁹

It is a convenient, and accurate classification, which distinguishes the scientific part of clerical discipline, from the practical. All that side of the clergyman's training, which relates to strictly theoretic branches, for example, to philology, philosophy, and

⁸ Barbara McClure, *Moving Beyond Individualism in Pastoral Care and Counseling: Reflections on Theory, Theology and Practice* (Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2011), 19-25.

⁹ Chiemeka Marie Utazi, "The Nature and Subject Matter of Pastoral Theology," Archive, last modified October 25, 2012, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/thenatureandsubjectmatterofpastoraltheology>.

theology, falls under the denomination of theological science; while all that part which relates to the public application of this theoretic culture, is practical theology. The subject of homiletics would therefore be comprehended under this latter, because sermonizing is the popular presentation of theological science. Sacred Rhetoric supposes that the speculative principles of the Christian religion have been previously mastered, by means of studies, and methods, that are more abstract than its own. Having been made a theologian, by the severer training, and the more fundamental discipline, the clergyman is then to be made an orator, by the more popular and practical culture of homiletics.

The clergyman bears still another character, and performs still another kind of labor, which belongs to the practical side of the profession. The clergyman is not only a preacher, whose function it is to impart public instruction before an audience, but he is also a pastor, whose office it is, to give private and personal advice from house to house, and to make his influence felt in the social and domestic life of the congregation. The clergyman is an orator, and therefore needs the homiletical education that corresponds. He is also a pastor, and hence requires the special discipline that qualifies him to watch over the personal religious interests of his flock. It is the object of the department of pastoral theology, to prepare him for this part of his work. The formation of clerical character, and the discharge of strictly parish duties, are, then, the principal topics in this branch of inquiry.

What the general is to the army the pastor is to the church. As the oriental shepherd goes before his sheep and leads them into green pastures, so the pastor goes before the people to lead them into green pastures of spiritual development. In Hebrews 13:7, 17, and 24, three times pastors are said to “have the rule over” the individual Christian, or over the church. The word “rule over” literally means “go before,” then comes to mean “rule, command, have authority over;” also “control in counsel, lead in influence.” In Hebrews 13:17, the apostle counsels,

“Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves.” This is a plain statement declaring the pastor’s authority over the church.¹⁰

Pastors are grateful to minister to churches. Yet when a church is going through a feeling of abandonment it feels as though areas of ministry are no longer opportunities to serve. It feels as though the church has no commitment and as if the church is ready to give up. Abandonment can be a hurting issue if it is not dealt with appropriately. Church attendance begin to die down, relationships are severed, and harmony is no longer there. Obviously, these things are vital to spiritual and church growth.

The Itinerant Ministry in the Methodist Church has caused many to miss the point. God is calling the church to renew its relationship and focus on fixing the hurting need of others. Galatians 2:16 tells us, “A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ.” We cannot earn heaven or God’s love. The message of God’s grace doesn’t cancel the need to serve – it just exposes the “why” of our service. In the Christian life, we are instructed to engage in certain disciplines and these disciplines are not a means of gaining God’s acceptance, but they are meant to be a celebration of His unconditional love and mercy.

Pastoral theology is defined to be, that part of the clerical curriculum which relates to the clergyman's conservative life. It contemplates him in his more retired capacity, as one who has the care of individual souls. The pastor is a cleric, and pastoral theology relates to the clergyman's curacy. The apostle Paul speaks of "watching for souls." The pastor, or cleric, is a watcher for souls.

¹⁰ Carroll, “The Twentieth-Century Pastor,” 191-210, accessed May 2, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

The theological issues that we are dealing with is abandonment. No one chooses to be abandoned. Abandonment occurs when those from whom we expect love, understanding, and acceptance turn away from us. Whatever the cause of the abandonment, the experience is painful. Church members, even whole groups within a church, abandon one another because of some disagreement over doctrine, polity, or otherwise not having their way. Christian church history is replete with instances where a disagreement or dispute regarding doctrine or polity, organization or choice of leadership, or even the use of a word in stating an ecclesiastic position has led not to just abandonment and expulsion of individuals and whole groups but to torture and elimination of those who were considered as heretics or enemies of the church.

Abandonment is more than an issue of history. It is a personal tragedy, leaving the victims in emotional turmoil, social isolation, homelessness, sickness, and disablement. Abandonment affects parishioners and pastors should expect to deal with it. Some need help working through their painful memories of being abandoned in the past, while others may seek support for a current crisis. Many such victims have confidence that God will bring about healing through the ministry of their pastors. Still others who have no connection to God or any church may also seek help from a pastor. Some who have been abandoned will never connect with a pastor unless the pastor goes to them.¹¹

Pastors and their families should not be surprised when they are targets of rejection. Many who have been abandoned will lose themselves to drug addiction and alcohol. Pastors and chaplains do not notice the addiction to serving the needs of others. Many hours are spent away from their families. Families are hurt because there is not much time spent with them. Pastors fail to recognize the anxiety, sadness and tears when we leave home to minister to others, a church meeting or another conference. Pastors are

¹¹ Lawrence LaPierre, "Abandonment and Pastoral Care," Ministry Magazine, last modified March 2015, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2015/03/abandonment-and-pastoral-care>.

meeting the needs of others; my family need is not being met. Wife is being ignored, children are being neglected and problems begin to surface.

A pastor can become a workaholic. From this families, may experience abandonment. Abandonment may manifest itself in pastors because of their unexpected departure from ministry. Pastors are walking away from the ministry in increasing numbers. Not only are the individual congregations left wondering why they were abandoned, but also ask themselves the question “Why doesn’t anyone want us?” Another way, not very common but real, suicide is happening more and more and causing pastors to abandon their congregation.

Many pastors feel abandoned when they do not understand or adjust to denominational policies. I serve in a denomination that made it clear that our loyalty, after our commitment to Christ, lay with the church. We are reminded when we are ordained, we promise to go where we are sent with a glad heart. Yes, we made this promise, but we have no idea of the strain that would put on us and our families. Pastors leave congregations too soon and this create a sense of abandonment within the congregation. The Itinerant Ministry has caused the churches to endure the loss of several pastors within a few years. This made the parishioners feel that they had been abandoned not just by the pastors who left them but by the Bishop that assigned them.

Though the theology of John Wesley is not characterized by the grand systematic principle in the way that Paul Tillich employed his method of correlation and Emil Brunner his paradigm of divine/human correspondence, nevertheless within Wesley’s more restricted soteriological interests, that is, within his ongoing concern for practical divinity, there does indeed emerge what Outler has called an axial theme around which all subsidiary doctrines are focused. More to the point, Wesley’s soteriological axial theme is displayed in the context of his order of salvation where it finds both its outworking and its ongoing coherence.¹²

¹² LaPierre, “Abandonment and Pastoral Care,” accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2015/03/abandonment-and-pastoral-care>.

Even though Wesley was well educated at Oxford and is very knowledgeable in a wide variety of topics, in what we associate with liberal arts, his purposes were pastoral. What we mean by pastoral, it is a profound passion for the people so that they may be fed and supported in their faith, no matter where they may be in the path of salvation. Later in the Methodist revival, Wesley was greatly concerned to educate and guide pastors and preachers, society and band leaders in the spiritual care of people. Wesley pastored his people. He positively models pastoral characteristics in his own style of preaching and especially in his letter writing. There have been over three thousand letters written by Wesley. Wesley was committed because there was value in writing his letters.¹³

In fact, he referred to his last personal pastoral meeting with his correspondent and incited her or him to use the same degree of confessional openness. His letters talked about pastoring Methodist and how happy he was by not being assigned to one congregational setting. The content of the letters revealed his pastoral nature. There was a significant increase in the number of letters Wesley wrote over the duration of his lifetime. This can be credited in many ways, but the development of Methodism served as the primary catalyst.¹⁴

His passion to have control over the rapidly growing movement drove his desire to stay prepared. He made sure he kept in touch mainly with his leaders and lay preachers. Considering the number of letters, he welcomed, it was astounding that Wesley seems to have abided by one of his own epistolary principles to answer every

¹³ Mark A. Maddix and Diane Leclerc, "A Wesleyan Way to Pastor, Wesleyan Theology as Pastoral Practice," NPH, accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2418/2418971.pdf>.

¹⁴ Maddix and Leclerc, "A Wesleyan Way to Pastor," accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2418/2418971.pdf>.

letter he received. There were over eight hundred letters that Wesley had received and written to women. As you may be able to tell he has a big heart for women. It could be debated that while Wesley could still exhibit his tendencies toward practicality, the letters he wrote to the women showed more attention than the administrative correspondence to his male preachers.¹⁵

The style of these letters showed a deeper sophistication that improved the differences in content. In the personal correspondence with his brother Charles, you could still see Wesley as the leader, the administrator, and the champion of his own ideas! When he wrote a letter to a woman, there was a different side of him that reflected the personality that his followers knew that had actual encounters with him. Some of the women Wesley only wrote one or two letters responding to specific questions. With several others, he carried on correspondence for over twenty years.¹⁶

John Wesley was passionate about doctrine. In fact, his love of doctrine is one of the more underappreciated (and sometimes even unknown) parts of his leadership of the Methodist movement. Wesley was such a believer in the importance of doctrine that it was—ironically—one of the things that caused him to get in trouble with his own Church of England. We see an example of that in a sermon from 1789 called “Prophets and Priests.” In answering critics who claimed that his actions amounted to separation from the church, Wesley responded: “I hold all the doctrines of the Church of England. I love her Liturgy. I approve her plan of discipline, and only wish it could be put in execution.”

¹⁵ Maddix and Leclerc, “A Wesleyan Way to Pastor,” accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2418/2418971.pdf>.

¹⁶ Maddix and Leclerc, “A Wesleyan Way to Pastor,” accessed May 3, 2017, <https://www.nph.com/vcmedia/2418/2418971.pdf>.

His appreciation for the way that the church's doctrine and discipline were laid out on paper led Wesley to want to see them truly put into action. In fact, he believed that's what the Methodist movement was attempting to do. When people would criticize him for planning Methodist services in the city of Dublin at the same time as regular church services, one of the reasons Wesley gave for why he did such a thing was to ensure that the people would have a chance to hear "that sound doctrine which is able to save their souls."

Remarkably enough, Wesley himself does not seem to have used our preferred and well-worked term *theology* but referred instead to "various" to illustrate, in his own writings, whether they be letters, addresses, or prefaces to published works, Wesley employed the terms "practical," "speculative," "controversial," "positive," "comparative," "mystic," and even the phrase "plain old Bible divinity" to articulate the full range of theological reflection. Of this use, the terminology of "practical divinity" clearly predominates, and it was employed to describe not only Wesley's *A Christian Library*, which consisted of "Extracts and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity," but also the much beloved *A Collection of Hymns of the People Called Methodists*.¹⁷

Today there are all kinds of misconceptions about the nature of the message that Wesley preached and wrote about. Sometimes he is depicted as an excitable evangelist that just wanted to get people pumped up about their faith. There was a lot of concrete content to what Wesley was trying to get across. It was not just about being energetic for Jesus (though that is certainly a good thing!). And it was not just a generalized message about grace or love. Wesley's understanding of the Christian gospel had sound doctrinal content—and he believed that content was of paramount importance for people to hear.

Pressed to summarize the Christian doctrine, Wesley thought most central to the Bible, Wesley typically spoke in terms of a three-part scheme: the doctrine of sin and the need for repentance; the doctrine of justification by faith and new birth; and the doctrine of sanctification or holiness. He imagines these three doctrinal heads as the porch, door

¹⁷ Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley, Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 3-4.

and house of religion. Wesley main doctrines... are three, that of repentance, of faith, and of holiness. The first of these we account, as it were, the porch of religion; the next, the door; the third is religion itself.

Wesley's intense commitment to core Christian doctrine can be explained by the fact that he believed people's salvation was at stake in what was being preached by Methodist preachers. The pulpit was not a place to fight about theological fancy, nor was it the place for the preacher to test out his own theories about the Bible. It was a place solely meant for the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the last retrospective essays Wesley wrote was in 1786 called the thoughts upon Methodism. It is there that he shared his thoughts about the prospects for the Methodist movement in the years to come. Since Wesley was not a man to mince words, he stated exactly what he thought the dangers were to the revival that he had led, by that point, for over forty-five- years.

He writes, "I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out." Our present age is one in which all three of those points Wesley makes are being tested in the extreme—doctrine, spirit and discipline. The Methodist movement may go one of any number of directions in the years to come. If it is to go in a Wesleyan direction, the Methodists themselves must surely take heed of Wesley's advice and embrace the biblical doctrine that Wesley himself embraced in the movement's first flourishing.¹⁸

William H. Willimon reminds pastors that we live in therapeutic culture. Where all human problems are reduced to sickness. We want not so much to be saved or changed, but rather to feel better about ourselves. Harry Emerson Fosdick once called preaching "counseling om a group scale." The pastor becomes not the teacher or the preacher or the

¹⁸ Andrew C. Thompson, "John Wesley and the Power of Christian Doctrine," Archives, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.andrewthompson.com/category/wesleyan-theology/>.

moral guide, but rather the therapist who helps evoke spiritually-inclined sentiments in individuals-soothing anxiety, caring for the distressed, and healing the maladjusted.

Certainly, the pastor is to care for the people. But the pastor cares “in the name of Christ,” which may give a different cast and set different goals for the pastor’s care than for that of a secular therapist. What the Christian faith might define as “a well-functioning personality” might be considerably at odds with contemporary definitions of mental health.¹⁹

When people are hurting from the feeling of abandonment we as pastors are the one who they seek healing from. A pastor is someone who sees after the issues are ubiquitous to the human experience. This is a reality that can heighten our religious experience or diminish it altogether. The way we are impacted by the issues in our lives depends largely on how we understand them and how committed we are to make the necessary adjustments.

Abandonment issues have huge theological implications for Christians. The argument can be made that pastors will need to expand more of their pastoral energies with the congregations while they are there. The itinerant ministry has a great impact on congregations. We must meet the needs of the people and understand their concerns of the constant moving of pastors.

Hurt from feeling abandoned by the church can be a “silent killer.” It is a “silent killer” because of what this hurt, and feeling does deep in the fabric of the mind, heart, and soul. If this is not dealt with, it will destroy happiness, joy, and even break up the church. The disharmony in the church damages the ministry and outreach of the church. Some churches never recover.

The feeling of abandonment can bring such devastation to your heart. This kind of devastation is different from the kind that takes place in the workplace, marketplace or

¹⁹ William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 59.

home. This has taken place in the church, a place where healing is supposed to take place. People do not expect to get hurt because the pastor is moved. The relationships that have been developed is what hurts. For some the pastor, have baptized them or their children, have given the eulogy at their loved one's funeral and sowed the word of God into their lives.

The church is the one place almost everyone agrees should be safe, accepting, forgiving, and free from hurt and pain. In the Methodist Church congregations sit on pins and needles on appointment day of the Annual Conference to see if their pastor will return to them. For some Sunday mornings used to mean something special. Now people face them with dread, with a bittersweet sorrow that tugs at their hearts and a headache-inducing tension that make them stay away from church. The desire to play hooky from church on the Lord's day, a day of worship when families gather together into the house of God. They show up at church every week, sing the songs, hear the sermon, and place money in the offering plate while the whole time, they feel as if they are just going through the motions out of habit and obligation. They are not connecting to God or other people there, and you are not motivated because they are wondering "when will I be hurt again?"

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Healthy development requires adequate physical and emotional care, and unmet needs can result in feelings of abandonment. Sometimes experiences of abandonment can constitute a traumatic event in a person's life. A pattern of emotional neglect can be traumatic and may also qualify as a form of abandonment. Whether an act of abandonment occurs in childhood or adulthood, the impact can be pervasive, negatively affecting every relationship developed in a person's life, whether those relationships are intimate, social, or professional.

Sometimes life takes your breath away when surrounded with the awesomeness of God's creation. Going for a long walk in the woods, watching a beautiful sunset and watching the beautiful waves all reveals God's beautiful creation, but sometimes life can feel like a kick in the gut, and the pain that suffocates you make it hard for you to breath. Life brings many amazing things. The beauty of God's creation will put you in a state of amazement and gratitude.

A person who has experienced abandonment is often more likely to encounter long-term psychological challenges. These concerns are typically based primarily on the fear that abandonment will recur. Abandonment can impair a person's ability to trust others, feel worthy, or experience intimacy. They may lead a person to

experience anxiety, depression, codependence, or other difficulties. Every human being carries hurts or scars or wounds.¹

Mark McMinn believes that the value of counseling interventions is found less in one's technical training and theoretical orientation than in one's character. At first this may seem discouraging because most of us struggle with nagging character flaws and because we are unsure how to train ourselves in matters of character. However, in drawing deeper into the spiritual life, people recognize that it is not merely the flawed character that brings humanity into interactions with others; it is divine character revealed through us.²

The intense emotional crisis of abandonment can create a trauma severe enough to leave an emotional imprint on individuals' psychobiological functioning, affecting their future choices and responses to rejection, loss, or disconnection. Following an abandonment experience in childhood or adulthood, some people develop a sequela of post traumatic symptoms which share sufficient features with post-traumatic stress disorder to be considered a subtype of this diagnostic category.

“WHAT is abandonment?” people ask. “Is it about people in search of their mothers? Or people left on someone else's doorstep as children?” I answer: Every day there are people who feel as if life itself has left them on a doorstep or thrown them away. Abandonment is about loss of love itself, that crucial loss of connectedness. It often involves breakup, betrayal, aloneness—something people can experience all at once, or one after another over a period of months, or even years later as an aftershock. Abandonment means different things to different people. It is an extremely personal and individual experience. Sometimes it is lingering grief caused by old losses. Sometimes it is fear. Sometimes it can be an invisible barrier holding us back from forming relationships, from reaching our

¹ John Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal till You Get to Know Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2003).

² Mark R. McMinn, *Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 4, 6.

true potential. It sometimes takes the form of self-sabotage. We get caught up in patterns of abandonment.³

Being abandoned can be one of the most difficult situations one will ever have to face.

Abandonment issues can trigger depression, mistrust, and irrational amounts of fear.

These issues affect daily life, careers, friendships and romantic relationships. If you have been abandoned, you are not alone — even though you might feel that way. If you are to overcome abandonment, you must first be realistic and identify why it affects you to the extent that it does. Abandonment is a complex issue. Like dealing with the death of a love one, abandonment involves a deep sense of loss.

Unlike grieving over a departed friend or relative, there is little or no closure with abandonment. In some cases, there are no goodbyes and no last word, just loss. The finality of death is certain, but abandonment issues deal with the uncertainty of whether the loved one will ever return, why they left in the first place, and whether the one abandoned will ever be able to trust the one who abandoned them again. Like being rejected, being abandoned may usher in an extreme loss of self-worth. Knowing why you hurt so badly is the first step in overcoming abandonment.

When hurt by abandonment, people generally deal with hurt the following ways: become overly needy and require constant reassurance and attention or resolve to never allow yourself to never trust anyone ever again. When dealing with abandonment, one will attempt to fill the empty space in their heart with anyone who is willing to listen and give attention. One can scare off a potential mate or friend by coming on too strong early in a relationship.

³ Susan Anderson, *The Journey from Abandonment to Healing* (New York, NY: Berkley Books, 2000), 67-68.

The best and most practical way to deal with abandonment is to be honest with self and surround yourself with close friends and relatives whom you trust. Get help with a professional counselor. Gradually take steps to become close to those people and rely on them for increasingly important things.

Life coach and licensed psychologist Nando Pelusi, PhD, says it's important not to raise hopes too high — people with abandonment issues want to feel absolute certainty that their relationships will always remain strong and steady, but in reality, nobody ever has that certainty. However, with time, and perhaps counseling, those who are dealing with abandonment can begin to trust again. It's also important to watch for telltale signs and clues that might let you know who can be trusted and who can't. If someone continuously drops the ball with the little things, they're probably going to fail at the important things, too. So an element of discernment is required before you can plunge confidently into serious relationships.⁴

Abandonment is a very complex issue because of the fear, self-doubt and despair there are some feelings no one wants to talk about. These feelings are so intense that the shame is humiliating. The shame and embarrassment are not just about the way one may feel after being rejected but it can linger for quite a while. These feelings can induce panic, leaving one with the thoughts of weakness, helplessness, unlovable, repulsive and cannot take care of self. People tend to suffer their feelings in silence or even try to deny them. These intense feelings must be addressed very quickly. Abandonment and its wounds can be deeply entrenched. Many who have been abandoned will seek therapy for their grief, but they have a serious problem overcoming that emptiness that is so often misdiagnosed and treated as depression. For some people, it requires taking medication to treat chemical imbalances and grief.

⁴ E. C. LaMeaux, "How to Overcome the Feeling of Abandonment," Gaia, accessed May 8, 2017, <https://www.gaia.com/blogs/discover/how-to-overcome-the-feeling-of-abandonment>.

Sometimes the causes of abandonment issues are painfully obvious, but even if you were not literally abandoned, fear of abandonment is said to be the most painful. Abandonment is an unintentional loss or severance of a deep connection that was cultivated during a very important relationship. When someone leaves suddenly, those who are left experience something akin to post-traumatic stress disorder. Abandonment can be intentional or unintentional.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychobiological condition. This condition can come from abandonment and it can cause severe traumas with current life. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a factor of abandonment which can cause victims to have flash-backs and very low self-esteem. PTSD can lead to total isolation from fear of hearing loud sounds such as explosions or gun shots. This can create a barrier between the victim and their family.⁵

Victims of abandonment trauma can have emotional flashbacks that flood us with feelings ranging from mild anxiety to intense panic in response to triggers that we may or may not be conscious of. Once our abandonment fear is triggered, it can lead to what Daniel Goleman calls *emotional hijacking*. During an emotional hijacking, the emotional brain has taken over, leaving its victims feeling a complete loss of control over their own lives, at least momentarily. If emotional hijacking occurs frequently enough, its chronic emotional excesses can lead to self-depreciation and isolation within relationships, as well as give rise to secondary conditions such as chronic depression, anxiety, obsessive thinking, negative narcissism, and addiction.⁶

People who are affected with PTSD of abandonment can have intensified emotional responses to abandonment triggers which may be insignificant to others. Depending on

⁵ Susan Anderson, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder of Abandonment," last modified November 12, 2013, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.abandonment.net/articles/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-of-abandonment-part-i-an-overview-and-list-of-30-characteristics>.

⁶ Anderson, "Post-Traumatic Stress," accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.abandonment.net/articles/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-of-abandonment-part-i-an-overview-and-list-of-30-characteristics>.

circumstances, for instance, when we feel slighted, criticized, or excluded, it can initiate an emotional disturbance and interference, and even compromise your personal or professional life. Learning about the mind recruits' cognitive structures and experiences.⁷

Theoretical Foundations of Abandonment

As humans, we are intensely social creatures. When there is a close relationship with another person that is often the source of great joy in our life, it can also be associated with tremendous pain and suffering. Relationships early in life with caregivers, siblings, and extended family are part a mechanistic unfolding of human development – the biological and psychological processes are affected profoundly by these experiences. When children are born into the world their neurobiological systems are highly sophisticated which make them tuned to their social environment and in turn these systems are shaped by the social surroundings.

Unfortunately, overt forms of abandonment and neglect are all too common and can result in serious long-term physical and psychological consequences. It has been proven in large research studies that adverse experiences have led to serious health risks, which include, forms of chronic illness and even shorten the length of a person's life. Private forms of relational trauma and emotional abuse can lead to detrimental outcomes especially in area social-emotional development.

While the term "relational trauma" often connotes overt forms of maltreatment such as physical and sexual abuse, it can also be used to describe covert forms of

⁷ Henry M. Wellman, *Making Minds: How Theory of Mind Develops* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 160.

maltreatment such as abandonment, enmeshment, parent-child role reversal, verbal abuse, love-withdrawal, and many other forms of emotional abuse.⁸

Children, caregivers, and outside observers may have difficulties recognizing relational trauma this may continue throughout much of childhood and even into adulthood. Relational trauma can have a deceptive effect on development through persistent, disruptive interaction pattern. While the brain is developing these social interaction, patterns are occurring and is shaping the way that individuals think and feel about themselves, others and the world around them.

Of the most prevalent fears around the world, is the fear of being alone. We have all evolved into social beings, and our very existence depends on our numbers. These fears usually stem from childhood, where a person might have experienced a traumatizing effect such as the loss of a parent or friend through moving away, divorce, death, or lack of physical or emotional care.

Trust issues can be a huge problem for those who have been abandoned growing up. These issues usually stem from the feeling that someone they are close to will desert them in the future. To prevent this from happening, he or she engages in unhealthy behaviour that hurts the relationship. This will make the abandonment more likely to happen.

This becomes a pattern of self-destruction, and it can lead you closer to the exact thing you are most afraid of. Fear of abandonment from traumatic experiences does not have to stem from a love one abandoning them. It can also result of being ridiculed, being

⁸ Jon Caldwell, "Attachment Theory and Developmental Consequences of Relational Trauma," The Meadows, last modified January 26, 2012, accessed May 5, 2017, <https://www.themeadows.com/blog/item/308-attachment-theory-and-the-developmental-consequences-of-relational-trauma-by-dr-jon-caldwell-d-o>.

emotionally abused, or neglected. There are those who feel abandoned because a relationship has been broken.

People who suffer from this fear sometimes choose to go to a therapist. The therapist would examine the person's background and attempt to discover which traumatic event(s) may have caused this fear, determining whether it started in childhood or adulthood. Over time, the therapist would teach the patient how to separate the fears of the past from the present, so they can begin the healing process by developing the ability to lessen the grip that the fears have on them. Although therapy is often effective, it certainly is not the only thing that a person with abandonment fears can do to help themselves. You may be able to overcome these abandonment issues on your own – through a little effort – and finally be able to build flourishing relationships once again, without panicking about what may or may not happen in the future.⁹

Many in the church have been abused by shepherds who should be restoring people back to God but instead chose to condemn those that have been abused. Perhaps, many have felt the hurt and have been neglected by church members who should have cared enough to seek those who had gone astray and returned them back to the flock. Many have been victims of sinful, selfish, and hurtful acts of those in and around the church.

We must acknowledge the possibility that sometimes we make it our choice to remain victims after we have had the opportunity to move on. It becomes a waste of our spiritual potential to zero in on how events of the past could have or should have been different. The treatment we received from other Christians should have been different. The truth is things are not different, nothing could change our present situation and no amount of time spent dwelling on how another shepherd or sheep hurt us. “Imagine being shot and being rushed to the emergency room. Spending all your time worrying about

⁹ Wilson Ferguson, *Overcoming Fear of Abandonment: The Ultimate Guide to Overcoming Fear of Abandonment and Getting Rid of Abandonment Issues for Good* (Amazon Digital Services, LLC, 2014).

who shot you should not be the first concern but the first concern should be focused on survival.”¹⁰

We should seek immediate help with physical hurts. But spiritual and emotional hurts seem to arouse a response unlike any other wound. “We tend to focus on the shooter when we are “shot” in the church and not the healer. The enemy knows that healing is available and does not want us to get healed. This is one of the enemy’s most effective distraction strategies.”¹¹

Satan wants us to forget that being hurt and broken is an integral part of God's plan for our growth. The apostle Paul, who begged God to remove his affliction, came to an important realization: And then he told me, "My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness." Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9, The Message) Paul "quit focusing on the handicap." This action is essential to recovery. Sadly, many of us stop acting when we are broken, but this point of resignation is just short of the point where we can receive God's healing.¹²

Psychology of Empathy

The foundation for all effective therapeutic work is empathy. Rather than a classical analytical “blank screen,” it is important for the therapist to be warm and genuine and to have “unconditional positive regard” for the patient (though not necessarily for everything the patient says or does). The therapist offers an honest, deeply human presence. In this case, Carl Rogers’s view of empathic relationship is the basis for therapy: “It is the quality of the interpersonal encounter with the patient which is the most significant element in determining effectiveness.” This is echoed as a tenet of existential therapy as well: “It is the relationship that

¹⁰ Dave Burchett, “When You’re Hurt by the Church,” Christianity Today, July 2007, accessed May 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/101304a.html>.

¹¹ Burchett, “When You’re Hurt by the Church,” accessed May 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/101304a.html>.

¹² Burchett, “When You’re Hurt by the Church,” accessed May 6, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2007/july-online-only/101304a.html>.

heals.” The therapist genuinely cares about the well-being of the patient as his or her first priority.¹³

As we age, we believe that it is important to keep empathy in our lives when thinking about other people. What if everything we believe we knew about empathy and its value is wrong? What if empathy hurts us more than it helps?

If a person lacks empathy it can be hard to understand. Putting yourself in another person’s shoes to *feel* what they’re feeling, this idea is that by experiencing another person’s pain, will help us better understand their situation. In many cases, this is done as an alert to action.

Empathy causes us to show emotion to others. When showing empathy, it can cause us to make poor decisions. We encounter our family or friends going through a period of abandonment we allow our emotions to take control of what is happening.

Empathy allows us to feel what another person is going through.

According to emotional intelligence author, Daniel Goleman empathy is defined as (1) understanding the emotional makeup of people and (2) treating people according to their emotional reactions. Goleman and other emotional intelligence and workplace competency researchers have consistently identified empathy as a core component of emotional intelligence and a powerful predictor of success in many professions. Empathy helps us to develop deep levels of rapport and trust. Having poor empathy skills can lead to serious consequences. It can lead to conflict born of misunderstanding. Without it we can feel lonely within a relationship. Lack of empathy can cause companies to make catastrophic blunders that alienate their customers or employees and it can even incite violence.¹⁴

Outside of our personal relationships, trying to feel what others feel leads us to make biased, poorer decisions that could actually harm others. Empathy causes us to focus on unimportant things. Feeling positive and warm thoughts toward another person without actually needing to experience their suffering — may be

¹³ Pamela Cooper-White, *Many Voices: Pastoral Psychotherapy in Relational and Theological Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 185.

¹⁴ David F. Swink, “I Don’t Feel Your Pain: Overcoming Roadblocks to Empathy,” March 7, 2013, accessed May 18, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/threat-management/201303/i-dont-feel-your-pain-overcoming-roadblocks-empathy>.

more beneficial. When people employ compassion (rather than empathy), it results in less biased decision-making. It also seems that it may result in less burnout from “empathetic distress.” Mindfulness meditation promotes our compassion response. This may help explain why people who regularly engage in mindfulness are “kinder to others and more willing to help. We don’t need to get rid of our empathy for others. We just need to use it in more appropriate situations, where its strong, biased emotional response doesn’t cause us to make decisions that are logically — and morally — questionable.”¹⁵

At this present moment, “the whole essence of the spiritual life consists in recognizing the designs of God for us.”¹⁶ All reading that is not of God’s design that is chosen by us are harmful. The Will of God are the grace which works in the depths of our hearts through reading. Our fulfillments manifest themselves in different ways in which they “become our duties, forms, and increase and perfect the “new man” in us until we attain the stature destined for us by divine wisdom. This mysterious growth in age of Jesus Christ in our hearts is the end and fulfillment produced by the designs of God; it is the fruit of His grace and His divine goodness.”¹⁷

The mind may choose to be filled with many ideas, even if the mind is afflicted with worries and distractions. The divine will be always for the present moment. “The Will of God is the health, life, body, soul and salvation no matter what the external appearance of the thing to which it is applied.”¹⁸ God’s will is all-powerful therefore we must not set limits to its actions.

¹⁵ John M. Grohol, “Psychology of Empathy: Why It May Hurt More Than You Know,” Psych Central, last modified May 2005, accessed May 6, 2017, <https://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2017/03/27/psychology-of-empathy-why-it-may-hurt-more-than-you-know/>.

¹⁶ J. P. de Caussade, *Self-Abandonment to Devine Providence* (Charlotte, NC: Saint Benedict Press, 1959), 601.

¹⁷ De Caussade, *Self-Abandonment*, 601.

¹⁸ De Caussade, *Self-Abandonment*, 601.

Having meaningful relations is essential for leading a happy and self-fulfilled life, but chronic loneliness can damage us in ways that goes beyond limiting our basic happiness. In addition to the emotional pain and longing loneliness causes, it is also associated with clinical depression, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, hostility and sleep disturbances. More important, loneliness has an alarming effect on our general health.¹⁹

Loneliness begins gradually. Our friends and love ones move on, another friend gets married and move away, and before we know it the social circle that had been developed in the past now ceases to exist and now we find ourselves spending most if not all our weekends alone. Church on Sunday is no longer an option. When people are lonely from abandonment they are likely to encounter a variety of societal responses that will influence them even further.

When you ask people with a psychotic disorder, like schizophrenia, what challenges them most in daily life they are likely to say – ‘loneliness’. As nearly everyone can attest, loneliness is painful. It’s the distressing *feeling* that comes when you don’t feel socially accepted or connected. Loneliness is different therefore from simply being alone, or only having a limited social network – as the saying goes “you can live alone but not feel lonely, or you can be surrounded by friends and still feel disconnected.”²⁰

Loneliness entraps us by having an impact on our perceptions such that we are likely to view our existing relationships more negatively. When people reject us and turn us down we assume that they are not interested in our company. We take little initiative and find excuses to turn down invitations when we do get them.

Loneliness is very visible to others who are likely to label us as less interesting and less appealing as social prospects. This stigma, combined with the negativity and suspicion we might project in social situations makes it challenging for us to establish new social and romantic connections. The more socially and emotionally isolated we are the more our social skills and relationship ‘muscles’ tend to atrophy. Skill sets often weaken when unused and our ability to connect and relate

¹⁹ Guy Winch, *Emotional First Aid* (New York, NY: Hudson Street Press, 2013), 38.

²⁰ Johanna C. Badcock and Vera Morgan, “Loneliness Matters for People with Psychotic Disorders,” *Atlas of Science*, January 12, 2016, accessed May 18, 2017, <https://atlasofscience.org/loneliness-matters-for-people-with-psychotic-disorders/>.

can easily get rusty after a period of isolation. If things go badly when we try to use these ‘muscles’ we don’t attribute the failure or rejection to our skill sets being rusty but see it as further evidence of our fundamental undesirability.²¹

Difficulties and trials are a part of every traveler's journey in life. These situations sometime make or break us and then piece us back together into something different. When we come out we are a totally different person than when we went in. that is nature of trials. Many have turn to God in their difficulties, what do we think has happened when we feel that God has abandoned us and has forced us to face the darkness alone?²²

It is so important to discover the relevant way of co-operating with God.²³ God is our Father and He loves us so much. God cares when we are hurting and when we feel abandoned. We can be at ease knowing that God loves us because of the love that God has for us, we trust Him in knowing that “He will never leave us, nor will He forsake us.” The relationship that we have with God we should have that same relationship with our families and with every person we meet. When we say that God is “Our Father” we feel safe knowing that He will never abandoned us and that He will always be near his children.²⁴

Abandonment issues are complex issues. One of the assumptions this project is making is that congregations desire to keep the same pastor if relationships are going well

²¹ Guy Winch, “Why Loneliness Is a Trap and How to Break Free,” *Psychology Today*, last modified September 19, 2013, accessed May 17, 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201309/why-loneliness-is-trap-and-how-break-free>.

²² Tiffany Fletcher, “Seven Things to Remember If You Feel like God Has Abandoned You,” *Family Share*, accessed May 16, 2017, <https://familyshare.com/21713/7-things-to-remember-if-you-feel-like-god-has-abandoned-you>.

²³ Leslie D. Weatherhead, *Psychology Religion and Healing* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1951), 439.

²⁴ Fletcher, “Seven Things,” accessed May 16, 2017, <https://familyshare.com/21713/7-things-to-remember-if-you-feel-like-god-has-abandoned-you>.

and the church is happy. Another assumption is that all people who suffers from abandonment have psychological and emotional blockages stemming from their issues. Admittedly, this will not be true for all individuals; there will always be outliers. Yet, for those who fit the descriptions, their leadership woes can indeed be traced to past experiences locked into their psyche which constantly interfere with their abilities to reach peak performances sustainably.

Psychotherapy is a discipline that mainly addresses the emotional needs that are often masked by other opportunistic needs. In psychotherapy, the therapist builds a trusting relationship with the patient while engaging them in dialogues aimed at peeling back the layers to unveil the not so obvious unmet needs and unresolved issues.²⁵

The next stage could mean various things for the patient—some find resolution and others do not. What is common to both categories though is that they know what was causing the blockage and would be better prepared to deal with new crises in the future.

Clinical psychology and psychiatry form the youngest of the healing professions, one that did not even begin until long after religious healing had ceased to be an accepted part of Western culture. In fact, there was little interest in what was hidden in the souls and minds of troubled people almost until the century in which Freud made his original far-reaching discovery.²⁶

With the Holy Spirit's enabling power, you can develop self-control—a magnificent piece of the Spirit's fruit described by the apostle Paul in Galatians 5:23. By learning how to control those things that control your emotions, you can turn them around. In other words, by learning how to exercise self-control over your thoughts and actions, you can ultimately train your emotions to go in a new direction—a direction that works with you

²⁵ Irving B. Weiner and Robert F. Bornstein, *Principles of Psychotherapy: Promoting Evidence-Based Psychodynamic Practice* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009).

²⁶ Morton T. Kelsey, *Psychology, Medicine and Christian Healing* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), 234.

to accomplish your goals rather than against you. Self-control is the ability to consistently make wise decisions and fulfill responsibilities based on God's Word rather than based on one's feelings. Self-control has to do with not giving in to your feelings. The greatest hindrance to developing self-discipline is your feelings. The greatest enemy of self-control is your feelings.

The sense of being alone in suffering from abandonment is one of the biggest barriers to transforming stress. Suffering brings us face to face with our failures, and with the stinging effects of life's stubborn limits.²⁷ When we feel, isolated and abandoned, it is more difficult to act or see any good in our situation. It also can keep us from reaching out to others, either to get the help we need or to benefit from being of help to others.²⁸

When one is going through a period of abandonment due to being hurt because a relationship has been broken, one may have thoughts such as:

- Am I only feeling this way because I am not happy how things are going on in my life?
- Are other feeling the same hurt that I am feeling?
- I tend to feel like other people must be happier than I am.
- Why do people that I get attached to have to abandon me?
- I always feel as though no one cares about me nor do they care about how I feel.

²⁷ Anthony B. Pinn and Benjamin Valentin, *The Ties that Bind* (London, UK: Continuum, 2001).

²⁸ Kelly McGonigal, *The Upside of Stress* (New York, NY: Penguin Random House, 2015), 165.

Everyone reacts differently to hurts and stresses. You may have experienced all these things, but fully recovered. What is most important is to focus on anything that lingers.

What are you having trouble letting go of?²⁹

Sociology of Religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of the discipline of sociology. This objective investigation may include the use of both quantitative methods (surveys, polls, demographic and census analysis) and qualitative approaches such as participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival, historical and documentary materials. Sociologists of religion study every aspect of religion from what is believed to how persons act while in worship and while living out their stated convictions. They study the changing role of religion both in the public arena (political, economic and media) and in intimate interpersonal relationships. Global religious pluralism and conflict, the nature of religious cults and sects, the influence of religion on racial, gender and sexuality issues, and the effect of the media and modern culture has on religious practices are all topics of interest in current sociology of religion research.³⁰

The field of sociology is designed to observe and record patterns of human behavior negative or positive that form the building blocks of society. A more functional view of sociology suggests that it is aimed at identifying, defining, understanding and sometimes managing social problems. While it can be quite a challenge to define social problems as they vary considerably from one societal context to another, it is viewed as any phenomenon that apparently affects a significant number of individuals within that society.³¹ When a social trend is observed to have a problematic impact on several people within a community, a social problem has emerged. By inference, if a significant number

²⁹ Gary Kaplan, *Total Recovery: A Revolutionary New Approach to Breaking the Cycle of Pain and Depression* (New York, NY: Rodale, 2014), 192.

³⁰ “The Sociological Study of Religion,” Hartford Institute for Religion Research, accessed May 18, 2017, http://hrr.hartsem.edu/sociology/about_the_field.html.

³¹ Jackie Brooks, “The Principles of Sociology,” Online Learning Tips, last modified January 7, 2013, accessed December 17, 2016, <http://onlinelearningtips.com/2013/01/07/the-principles-of-sociology/>.

of church contexts show tendencies of leadership failures which inadvertently affects members of the society, it possibly qualifies as a social problem.

While the core competence of sociologists is to observe behavioral pattern through which they can predict social outcomes, they can also create models for addressing social problems or preventing them before they occur. Furthermore, the development of such models is often based on historical data and cumulative information about human and societal behavior that reflect either positively or negatively on the society. While the psychotherapist or psychologist deploys strategies to unravel debilitating psychological and emotional patterns in persons, the sociologist is more concerned about the impact an emergent behavioral pattern would have on an otherwise normal society.³²

It follows therefore, that there is a sociological answer to the challenge of serial leadership failures within congregational contexts if it impacts a significant number of people within the community. Given that the possible reason for the failures is the rather parochial view of leadership that ignores the unmet needs and unresolved issues of the leaders, then it becomes sociologically predictable what kinds of outcomes to expect. Such a scenario would clearly warrant a sociological solution. Arguing that there is a need for sociological leadership, Whiteford and Ganem notes that “gaining a more holistic approach of leadership will assist in the understanding of many areas of sociology wherein ideas about leadership, authority, and power are embedded.”³³

³² James M. Henslin, *Essentials of Sociology: A Down-to-Earth Approach*, 11th ed. (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2014).

³³ Scott Whiteford and Natasha Ganem, “Is There Such a Thing as ‘A Sociology of Leadership?’” Work in Progress, last modified October 27, 2015, accessed December 17, 2016, <https://workingprogress.oowsection.org/2015/10/27/is-there-such-a-thing-as-a-sociology-of-leadership/>.

Therefore, sociological solutions to leadership challenges would include critical considerations for a social strategy that can holistically eliminate those challenges.

In conclusion, there are different abandonment theories, each has its own assumptions, own advantages and disadvantages.

- 1) Self validation: Acknowledge the severity of the emotional wound you have sustained. You can wear out our friends' ears going over the details of your abandonment, but they cannot possibly grasp the depth of the pain or its persistence. Become your own validator.
- 2) Physician, heal thyself; tend thy own wound: Take 100-percent responsibility for your own recovery.
- 3) Pain management means time management: Build in daily activities that are life-sustaining, including time with supportive friends, therapists, and support groups. Create quality creature comforts. Work provides well-needed structure. Throw yourself into work to enjoy its 'occupational therapy' benefits.
- 4) Get into the moment and stay there as long as possible: The future has been disrupted by the breakup, and your past is where your love attachment pulls so painfully. The only safe place is the split second of now. When your painful thoughts intrude, return to the moment, favoring now as you would a mantra.
- 5) Put your suffering to constructive use: Learn to transform pain into growth.³⁴

Abandonment leaves you wounded at the "soul level." It hurts you at your very core, tearing at your heart and mind. Your psyche is disturbed, to say the least, and very often the foundations of your beliefs are shaken. People experience abandonment through death, divorce, disaster, betrayal, and simply neglect. Loved ones are lost, spouses are betrayed, friends are separated, and security slips away as you find yourself isolated, helpless, and feeling alone. This is when lies from Satan slip in causing terrible wounds to your soul.

³⁴ Susan Anderson, "How I Survived Abandonment: Twelve Tips for a Complete Recovery," April 10, 2015, accessed May 18, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-anderson/how-i-survived-abandonmen_b_6598014.html.

These lies, if un-dealt with, will build a prison around you and keep you from experiencing God's healing in your life. Perhaps you will feel that you will never receive love again and this lie will lead to one of two responses: You will either become frustrated, and performance oriented, continually trying to earn the approval and love of others (and God), or you will become angry and aloof, and will try to protect yourself from being hurt by isolating yourself from receiving love.

Many theories have been discoursed to help find solutions to abandonment and neglect issues. Some of them are different in their approach, others are more specific.

The fear of abandonment is very real and can negatively impact a relationship and even sabotage it, if you aren't careful. It stems from prior relationships, childhood and adult, in which the person wasn't there for you. The emotional impact is still felt and the fear that someone will leave you in the present triggers all the old feelings of being abandoned unconsciously, subconsciously, and consciously. The problem is that the fear presents itself in the present even if the person you are with is not going to abandon you and it is a powerful and all-encompassing fear. You then act on your fear and the other person may feel smothered, confused, accused, misunderstood, rejected, and threatened and as a result, may actually leave.³⁵

Unfortunately, life brings pain and suffering. There is no escaping this, particularly on a personal level.³⁶ No one can understand your feelings, or what you have gone through. Satan mercilessly pierces you with another lie: You are alone! Your feelings perpetuate your isolation as you put up walls of protection. After all, it is up to you now to "survive." You have been abandoned, and no one is going to help you. No one is going to save you. You must fend for yourself. You have got to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. If you have allowed bitterness and forgiveness to come in, you will even resist

³⁵ Karla Downing, "How to Overcome the Fear of Abandonment," August 14, 2014, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.howtowinamansheart.com/blog/how-to-overcome-the-fear-of-abandonment/>.

³⁶ Eileen R. Borris-Dunchunstag, *Finding Forgiveness: A 7-Step Program for Letting Go of Anger and Bitterness* (New York, NY: McGraw Hill Companies, 2006), 177.

a most important step to healing, and that is to be vulnerable once again.³⁷ Different abandonment theories, behavioural theories and cognitive theories, are analysed here from different perspectives to help close the door on abandonment issues. Many people pursue therapy to address issues resulting from experiences of abandonment.

³⁷ Philip E. Lewis, *Hope Beyond Abandonment: Healing from Hurts, Hardships, and Fears* (Sparta, MI: House of Grace Ministries, 2008).

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The impact that Christ has on my life has placed me on a wonderful journey. Throughout my life there has been great joy as well as hurt working with people. Through it all, it has made me become a stronger pastor, teacher, husband, father and person. Conflicts and issues will always be a part of our lives, but it will take special people to engage in processes and efforts and work tirelessly to help resolve these problems.

Hopefully, this project will be a success and help solve the problems and serve as a measuring tool for the years to come. It will develop a strategy for the ministry and will be used to enhance relationships and leadership that will create a very positive outcome. I will examine the relationships of the members and use the findings to test the effectiveness of this project as a tool to further improve the group dynamics and proper functioning of church leaders. With a successful outcome, the church will become healthier and members will begin to love each other and become positively engaged in vital ministry.

Abandonment issues create a barrier that prevents congregational and pastoral disharmony. This barrier stops the church from reaching its full potential. This project will focus on how to heal broken congregations after being hurt due to constant pastoral changes. Good leadership is important for the church to be effective. Laying the

foundation work for this project unveiled several facts while taking in consideration that feelings are hurt, lives are damaged, and families are broken. This project must have strong foundational work to find a working solution in addressing the issues of “The Fear of Congregational Abandonment Caused by Itinerant Ministry.”

The foundational work and research that has been done consist of biblical, historical, theological and theoretical. These foundations pave the way for this project to become helpful within the Spottswood A.M.E. Zion Church, the A.M.E. Zion Church’s denomination and any church that is feeling the effects of pastoral abandonment.

Biblical foundation gives the project a scriptural foundation that will ensure that this project is biblically sound from the Old and New Testament. When David cried out in Psalm Thirteen How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? David was going through a feeling of abandonment and he wanted to make sure God heard his cry. John the tenth chapter gives a good foundation from the New Testament because it portrays a Shepherd laying down his life for the sheep and how he will not abandon the sheep in time of despair. A good shepherd is one who is with the sheep seven days a week, thirty days a month and twelve months in a year. This is an imitation of Christ the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep accompanies them, leads them, loves them and laid down His life for them.

Christ, the Good Shepherd, will never leave his sheep and He will never leave us. Therefore, having a strong biblical foundation for this project is a very important foundation to build upon.

The historical foundation in which I researched consist of the history of itinerant ministry, the history of the A.M.E. Zion Church, the history of Methodism and the history of John Wesley the founder of Methodism. The itinerant ministry has been active all the way back from the beginning of Methodism. John Wesley, as well as others, traveled to many places on horseback to preach revivals and to plant churches. Wesley had a plan in mind that traveling from area to area was a remarkable way to meet different people and build relationships. I can say that since I have been in the ministry, I have traveled many places and it has granted me the opportunity to meet different people. The feel of pastoral/congregation abandonment never crossed Wesley's mind. He did not see it as abandonment but rather as fellowship and relationship.

The word itinerancy is the one word that often hangs people up when they are appointed to be a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Things like being called by God, ministerial gifts and Wesleyan Theology are often not the issues with most people but when the word itinerancy is mention it can become a stumbling block, especially for those with young families or those who are starting a family. The idea of moving from place to place at the power and authority of another human being, the bishop, can be frustrating.

The hard and most hurting part is having to leave the people that you have grown to love and established relationships. Over the years more and more clergy have stayed longer in places. This can be a great thing if clergy and churches are continually creating new ways to minister to people. If churches and clergy are going through the motions, then it is not. The problems that arise from the itinerant system are not new, but the effects are perhaps more profoundly felt today.

Itinerancy can be a good thing because if the pastors are not a good fit and they cannot establish relationship with the people instead of the pastor making themselves miserable and the congregation miserable, it is good that you can move on. No congregation should have to feel like they are being abandoned. Pastors come, and they go. That is the beauty of Methodism and that is why every pastor should teach their congregations about the itinerant ministry as to why they may have to move. For every pastor, it is good to know that the church cares for the congregants and they want the pastor to stay but some churches are lacking the proper leadership and pastors can be the one that can give them that leadership that they need to grow and become successful.

The theological perspective in this project simply ask the question, “Where is God when the congregation is going through the feeling of abandonment?” This project must have a strong theological foundation. Theology is an attempt to understand God as He is revealed in the Bible. No theology will ever fully explain God and His ways because God is infinitely and eternally higher than humanity.

We can never understand why God does certain things, but we can know that we must trust God in everything that we do. This project will focus on pastoral theology. Pastoral theology is concerned both with the theory and with the practice of Christian ministry, because right practice proceeds from right belief. Pastoral theology addresses the difficulties of individuals, families and larger societal issues that contribute to the Christian growth in faith and leads to salvation. Thus, pastoral theology is not easily defined, but rather described and this allows for a fluid and open approach to a theology that has roots in the experiences contained within and outside of its distinct boundaries.

When people are hurting from the feeling of abandonment, we as pastors are the one who they seek healing from. A pastor is someone who manages the congregation's issues. This is a reality that can heighten our religious experience or diminish it altogether. The way we are impacted by the issues in our lives depend largely on how we understand them and how committed we are to make the necessary adjustments. Abandonment issues has huge theological implications for Christians. The argument can be made that pastors will need to expand more of their pastoral energies with the congregations while they are there. The itinerant ministry has a great impact on congregations. We must meet the needs of the people and understand their concerns of the constant moving of pastors.

Pastoral theology is that branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry, which brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations. The processes of theoretical development are increasingly being influenced with research findings from other disciplines because of their proven success in such areas. Likewise, it is becoming increasingly clear the church is lacking in its ability to initiate growth, it must do a better job in sustaining leadership. Since the focus of this project is drawing awareness to the dangers of itinerancy and congregational abandonment issues primarily due to the current Methodist system, an overview of the theories that have been used to directly or indirectly address this problem shows that the problems need to be better understood to help craft more practical solutions.

Abandonment leaves wounds. It hurts at the very core, tearing one's heart and mind. People experience abandonment through death, divorce, disaster, betrayal, and simply neglect. Loved ones are lost, spouses are betrayed, friends are separated, and security slips away as you find yourself isolated, helpless, and feeling alone.

These lies, if un-dealt with, will build a prison around you and keep you from experiencing God's healing in your life. Perhaps you will feel that you will never receive love again and this lie will lead to one of two responses: You will either become frustrated, and performance oriented, continually trying to earn the approval and love of others (and God), or you will become angry and aloof, and will try to protect yourself from being hurt by isolating yourself from receiving love.

When no one can understand your feelings, or what you have gone through, Satan mercilessly pierces you with another lie: You are Alone! Your feelings perpetuate your isolation as you put up walls of protection. After all, it is up to you now to "survive." You have been abandoned, and no one is going to help you. No one is going to save you. You must fend for yourself. Theories say that when we cannot deal with these psychological issues then we must reach out to others. Those who are trained in these areas and are sensitive to what you are going through.

Different abandonment theories, behavioural theories and cognitive theories, are analysed here from different perspectives to help close the door on abandonment issues. Many people pursue therapy to address issues resulting from experiences of abandonment.

The project completed for purposes of satisfying the Doctor of Ministry requirements at United Theological Seminary, involved creating and implementing a

training program in itinerant ministry for the members of Spottswood African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, in which I was glad to be one of the facilitators. This final project was designed to help the participants become aware of the struggles that arise not only for the congregation but for the pastor and family as well in itinerant ministry. This approach of the project will not only involve others, but I will also take part of the process.

This is how the process will be conducted: First, pre-test questionnaires and post-test questionnaires will be administered to the members. Second, the professional associates and contextual associates together decided to conduct workshops sixty minutes long for six weeks with members of the congregation. The research was designed to help measure the outcome of the field experience, or the project hypothesis. This training will serve as basis for future itinerant ministry programs, where these project participants shall serve as trainers that will help guide and instruct the development of the congregation when there is a change in pastoral leadership.

Methodology

The method used during the final project included two basic questions at the beginning of the session. The purpose of these two questions was to assess how well the participants understood how the itinerant system works. When questions were administered to the participants, the purpose was to assess what the participants knew, liked and disliked about itinerant ministry before the training. The expectation was that everyone that was participating in the surveys knew or had an idea of what itinerant ministry was all about and would acknowledge their likes and dislikes about the itinerant

ministry system. Most of the participants understood how the itinerant system worked but some did not really understand the meaning of itinerant ministry. After each of the training sessions, interviews took place with one of the participants that was present. Questions were asked of them about various areas of itinerant ministry.

There were six training sessions conducted and after the completion of the six training sessions, a post-training questionnaire was administered. The pre-training questions were used to get the participants familiar with the post-training survey, and what they thought about the constant change of pastors and how they valued their church. They were asked from a scale of one to five the following questions:

1. Am I a satisfied member of Spottswood AME Zion Church?
2. How much of an understanding do you have about the vision of Spottswood?
3. Does Spottswood meet the need of the people in the church and community?
4. Do I play an important part in helping Spottswood fulfill the mission of the AME Zion Church?
5. Am I provided opportunities for spiritual growth and leadership?
6. How do I feel about the constant moving of pastors in the AME Zion Church?
7. Do I intend to continue my membership at Spottswood AME Zion Church?
8. Do I value my membership at Spottswood?
9. Do I have a hand in making decisions regarding projects in the church?
10. Should the pastor be moved when the church is going well?

The post-training survey evaluated how well the participants received the information from the instructor during each educational training session. The instructor for this project used pre-test questionnaires and post-test questionnaires. This approach will

determine the most accurate data by which to analyze the outcome of the project. These questionnaires will assist the author in determining whether the research proved the hypothesis. Prayerfully, this process and project will become affective in helping others reach a better relationship in its respective congregations.

The instructor engaged the contextual associates to help with the research project. Together they decided to conduct workshops sixty minutes long for six weeks. On the Sunday after the training sessions, I then preached a series of sermons relation to abandonment, pastoral leadership and following God. Other pastors from the AMEZ, AME, CME and United Methodist Churches was brought in to teach sessions and help prepare the participant for the surveys.

The training program was conducted over the course of six Wednesdays from June 2017 to August 2017 at the Spottswood AME Zion Church. The pre-test surveys were given out at the beginning of the first session to get the participant familiar with the course. These sessions were taught in classroom style settings and there were question and answer periods at the end of each session. The participants were also allowed and encouraged to ask questions during the sessions to get better understanding. The instructors asked specific questions to the participants with the intention of dialogue and conversation among the group.

Implementation

Session One

The first session was held on June 21, 2017 and these two questions guided the conversation: What are the pros and cons of Itinerant Ministry? Do you feel that pastors

should be appointed one year at a time? The first portion of the session was an icebreaker where each participant went around the room and gave their names and what their roles or positions were in the church. We then discussed the importance of these sessions. After the icebreaker, the questionnaire was passed out with questions pertinent to the project model. The session took place at noon at the Spottswood AME Zion Church and there were twelve people in attendance. The workshop was presented before this group of people to explain that the itinerant ministry is a part of Methodism and not just something that the AME Zion church does. The historical foundation of this project provided the participants with a framework to address the problem. This session was also utilized to reflect on the pros and cons relating to itinerant ministry in the African Method Episcopal Zion Church and why pastors are appointed one year at a time.

Interview

Question One Interviewer: Over the years, how have you dealt with constant change of pastors?

Answer Interviewee: Change is hard for me personally and I do not take change well and it takes a little while. But I have embraced the different ones over the years. I understand the process of the church and I have learned a lot from them.

Question Two Interviewer: Are you a happy member of Spottswood AME Zion Church?

Answer Interviewee: Yes, I am happy being a member because this is where all my memories are, and I have grown up here. I love my church and the things that I do is because I love God and I love my church.

Sermon Series

The first sermon within the series was held on Sunday June 25th at 11:00 am. The sermon topic was “A Change is Coming!” The foundational scripture was Matthew 19:16-24. This first Sunday series expounded on change that will and can take place in itinerant ministry. In our sermon for today, we recognize that change is the breeding ground for miracles. If we want God to do something we must expect change to happen. We cannot stay stagnant and expect the church to grow and our ministry to flourish. The basis of this sermon was to let the members know that change will come, and they must be prepared and expect change. We must realize that change not only take place in the AME Zion Church but in our home, job, and community. We cannot get use to doing things the same way and even with pastoral change the church must focus on the message that God is sending rather than the messenger. When a church goes through a change of leadership it can be for the better of the church because if the church is not growing under the current leadership and if the members are not getting along with the current leadership than change should happen. In closing, I wanted the members to know that we must get used to having change because there is victory in change.

Session Two

The second session was held on June 28, 2017 and the following questions were addressed: What should the new pastor do when he first come into the new church? How hard is it to receive a new pastor after getting used to the previous pastor?

This session was facilitated by an African Methodist Episcopal pastor. A handout on the purpose and history of itinerant ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal

Church was given. He challenged them to not focus on the pastor but to focus on what the congregation should be doing to assist him or her to make an easy transition. He also explained to them that just as uneasy as they are about losing their previous pastor the new pastor is also a little disappointed to leave his or her previous congregation especially if they had to pack up their family and belongings to move across country. It became a little interesting now because one of the persons said that they wished they never had to get another pastor and they were tired of being used to train pastors. The person said that all they do is train pastors, so they can move on to bigger and better congregations and he did not feel that was fair. This session lasted for one hour and fifteen minutes because this session got very emotional. This session was ended with prayer and we left for the day.

Interview

Question One Interviewer: What do you know about itinerant ministry?

Answer Interviewee: My understanding is a pastor being assigned to a church for one year at a time and after that time a pastor can be moved to another congregation.

Question Two Interviewer: Should the pastor be moved when the church seem to be going well?

Answer Interviewee: No because when the church is growing spiritually and numerically, I do not believe it is healthy for a pastor to be uprooted. He has become the spiritual voice and when someone comes right in and you must adjust, and they may not be a good fit and that ministry and become stagnant.

Sermon Series

The second sermon was preached on Sunday July 2nd, 2017 at 11:00 am. The sermon topic was “A Total Commitment.” The foundational scripture was Romans 12:1-2. The second part of this sermon series focuses on the commitment we have to the church. Commitment is something that will stay with us for the rest of our lives. Just as Paul is encouraging the church to be committed, I am also encouraging Spottswood to stay committed. It does not matter whether the church changes pastor year after year the same commitment should follow. A total commitment is what we should become. We must first be totally committed to God, then our family, and our church and each other. We must be as Paul told the Ephesian church, “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” The three points that I gave was: first, we must give God our bodies. Secondly, we must give God our minds, and thirdly, we must give God our will.

Session Three

The third session was held on July 12, 2017. The discussion was guided by the following two questions: Do you think that pastoral leadership is the most important part of church growth? How do you feel about these classes helping to cope with pastoral transition?

This session was a very important one because it allowed the group to discuss how they felt about pastoral leadership. Most of the members felt that pastoral leadership was the key to church growth. Others felt that the key to church growth hinged on the membership having majority of the say so. The members seemed to be more comfortable because they could sense that this session was really helping them to heal and get over

feeling abandoned by the constant changing of pastors. The members began to understand that pastors are appointed by the presiding bishop only to serve one year at a time. They also understood that the pastor is assigned to work with the membership and not become a dictator. This session was very moving and there was much laughter and fun because some began to share their stories about some of the previous pastors. The question was asked can we choose our own pastor? The answer no was given because the membership does not vote on the pastor, but they are appointed.

Interview

Question One Interviewer: Why do you think pastoral leadership is important?

Answer Interviewee: I believe it is important because pastors are called to preach. A pastor must have a vision. If they do not have leadership skills, they will flounder. Leadership skills is important.

Question Two Interviewer: After being under leadership of a pastor for at least four years, how do you transfer your loyalty from one to another?

Answer Interviewee: My spirituality is about serving God and not man. Pastors will come and go. Whomever is in the pulpit has a vision to serve God and we must follow the vision.

Sermon Series

The third sermon was preached on Sunday July 16th, 2017 at 11:00 am. The topic was “Don’t Focus on Your Breakdown but Praise God for Your Breakthrough.” The foundational scripture was I Samuel 30:1-8.

When we find ourselves going through challenges in life we begin to have a spiritual breakdown. The AME Zion Church goes to conference every year with the possibility of pastoral change. My focus today is to encourage you Spottswood to not focus on your disappointments, do not focus on who your pastor will be, do not focus on why the bishop moved the previous pastor but praise God for your breakthrough. The church has always found a way to bounce back when it was down. The church will always find a way to move forward because God is the head of the church not the members and not the pastor but God. God is letting the church know today that even though we feel abandoned sometimes, even though we feel as God has left us my encouragement to you today is to know that God will never leave us, nor will He forsake us. So, to praise God for our breakthrough we must first encourage ourselves, second, we must trust the Lord, and third we must not allow the enemy to attack us. This sermon was very encouraging, and the members responded well.

Session Four

The fourth session was held on July 19, 2017. The discussion was guided by the following two questions: How long should an A.M.E. Zion pastor stay at a church? Who makes the decision when a pastor must leave?

A questionnaire was given out at the fourth workshop centered on the two above questions. Even though the members were complaining about the moving of the pastor the results from the questionnaire was very shocking. There was seventeen persons present at this session and twelve out of seventeen said that the pastor should be appointed one year at a time based on his performance. This session was facilitated by a

Christian Methodist Episcopal pastor. He explained to them that it is not about performance, but it is about the church growing and making a difference in the community. The workshop was started with prayer and the pastor allowed them to share their feelings about who should make the decision if a pastor stays or leave. Some of the members was very stern because they felt that they should make the decision because it is their church. The Christian Methodist Episcopal also shared that it was not their church, but it is God's church. God must always be the focal point of everything. He also reminded them that if the pastor is happy where he is, and the church is growing and making a difference in the community that most likely that pastor will remain at that church. This session allowed members to engage in conversation with the pastor and see his aspects to transition and how it affects not only him but his family as well. The contextual associate who assisted the pastor explained to the members that itinerancy is something that we cannot change and that we must work with any pastor that is appointed to the church. Prayer was given, and the session came to an end.

Interview

Question One Interviewer: How do you feel about pastors in the AME Zion Church constantly moving?

Answer Interviewee: I feel that some are moved to frequently. It takes at least seven to ten years to make a difference, to get to know the people, and get your vision across. It will take that long to make your mark on the church.

Question Two Interviewer: Have you ever felt that a pastor has abandon you by moving without informing you?

Answer Interviewee: No, I don't feel that has ever happened to me. I have had an inkling about it. I'm a change agent and I adapt to change easily.

Sermon Series

The fourth sermon was preached on Sunday July 23rd, 2017 at 11:00 am. The sermon topic was "Going on When You Feel Like Giving Up." The foundational scripture was Psalm 46:1-11.

The fourth sermon gave the members some support and assurance that even when they feel like giving up, when they are discouraged about pastoral change, when they are disgruntled about the AME Zion Church, when they are mad at how the AME Zion system works they can still go on when they feel like giving up. I assured the members that there are going to be days when they would like to dig a hole, climb in, and pull the dirt over to bury themselves because they are faced with a whole lot of problems. The three points I made was: first there is a divine presence, God is that ever-present help in time of trouble. Secondly, there is a divine promise. That divine promise is God will be with us always even to the end of the world. We are going to be faced with many trials and situations but know that God is with us. I told them to look at it as if God was the pastor and how we would be so excited about God as pastor, so they should be just as excited with whom God has sent to lead this congregation. Thirdly, there is a divine presence of God. God is saying be still and know that I am God. He is letting you know today, Spottswood, to trust Him. He is letting you know to not get caught up with what is going on all around you but to let you know He has not brought you this far just to leave you.

Fifth Session

The fifth session was held on July 26, 2017. The two following questions guided the conversation: Do you think the members are the only ones affected by the pastoral movement? What can you do to help pastors stay longer?

Today's session was good because there was twenty-five members present. More members came because the word got out that these sessions and workshops were very good. The members were very appreciative of the sessions and they knew that they had to support any pastor that was appointed to them. Today's session was conducted by a United Methodist pastor that had been assigned to eight churches in thirteen years. He shared with them his story about some congregations that did not want to accept his family. This pastor also explained how important it is that the family is accepted as well as the pastor. The members began to engage and asked questions about his experience of moving so much. The pastor explained that he knew that he was part of the itinerate ministry and he could be moved at any time. This session was very inspirational, and it allowed the members to see how important it is to accept not only the pastor but his family as well. Session was closed with remarks from all pastors that shared in the sessions AME Zion, AME, CME, and United Methodist pastors. The United Methodist Pastor shared with the members that "United Method doctrine also functions to nurture its members".¹ Session was closed with prayer.

¹ Scott J. Jones, *United Method Doctrine. The Extreme Center* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 80.

Interview

Question One Interviewer: If you were a pastor's spouse, how would you feel about the possibility of having to move every year?

Answer Interviewee: I think it would be a detriment to my family. Especially if we have children that are in school and we must uproot them from their friends and we would be disrupting their education by having to change schools very year.

Question One Interviewer: If you could change the rules of the AME Zion Church, what would you change about itinerant ministry?

Answer Interviewee: I think the members should be able to vote on whether the pastors stay or go. The members are the ones that know his or her work and they have been working with them throughout the year or years.

Sermon Series

The fifth sermon was held on Sunday, July 30th, 2017 at 11:00 am. The sermon topic was "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize." The foundational scripture was 1 Corinthians 9:24-25.

The sermon was a message of hope to tell Spottswood to keep their eyes on the prize and that prize is God. They do not have to go through life feeling abandoned. They do not have to go through life feeling down trodden. They do not have to go through life feeling neglected but know that God will take care of them. The message was a message of strength to share with them that there is strength in serving God. God gives the church pastors after His own heart. So, you cannot question who God sends to lead you. Instead of asking why, say Lord I thank you for who you have given us. The message was very

inspiring, the message was received well, and the people are having a strong change of heart about itinerant ministry.

Sixth Session

The sixth Session was held on August 2, 2017. During this final session, the members were given a post-test questionnaire and they were asked to complete it together. While the process was going on during this final session pastors from the AME, CME, United Methodist as well as myself held an open forum and allowed the members present to ask questions. We all answered them from our own denomination perspective. After the open forum, the members were given a post-test questionnaire that consisted of the following questions:

1. How do you feel about Itinerant ministry now after going through training?
2. Do you think that members are the only ones affected by the move of pastors?
3. What role can I play in making sure that the pastor stays at the local church?
4. Did itinerant ministry begin in the AME Zion Church?
5. Can members vote on whether the pastor stays or go?
6. How are pastors appointed to their churches?

The members felt satisfied as they could come together to express their concerns. They felt more knowledgeable at the end of the six-week workshop time frame that allowed them to see the pros and cons of itinerant ministry. The members were excited to be a part of this training.

The analysis of the pre-and post-test data collected showed itinerancy can not only affect members but pastors and their families as well. The process also shows that

the members should try to work hard in helping the new pastor make his or her transition. The data collected shows that the members are not against the AME Zion system, but they are totally against the change of pastors.

Data Analysis

If the church is to continue to grow it must reflect the local church's feelings, it must address the concerns the local church has as well as its pastors. From the collection of data this is how the members felt before and after the training took place.

Do you like how itinerant ministry work in the AME Zion Church?	
Pre-Test Results	Post-Test Results
100 % No	50% Yes

I found this question to be interesting because it states that many members of the A.M.E. Zion church do not know the church and its laws. Each pastor should be teaching their respective congregations the rules and policies of the church that we as a church can become a better church.

Sermon Series

The final sermon was preached Sunday August 6th, 2017 at 11:00 am. The topic was "We Come This Far by Faith." The foundational scripture was Mark 11:20-25. The last Sunday of this sermon series I can say that the members are eager to work with pastors that come and go. I assured Spottswood that they have come too far to turn around or to give up. First, I used the words of the song, We Come This Far by Faith to let them know that they have come a long way and they cannot turn around now and secondly, Leaning on The Lord. They must lean on the Lord and not they're on

understanding and they must acknowledge that He is Lord and He will direct their pathway. Third, they must trust on His holy words. They must continue to trust God in all that you do, and He will make ways for them, He will provide for them, He will strengthen them, and He will allow them to become a growing and powerful church. Thank the members for their support and participation during this six-week process.

Conclusion

This chapter consists of reflections, summations and conclusions of the project model. Reflecting on the life of the local church and how pastors are moved around, we the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church must come up with another system for pastoral assignments or the church will go through a big decline. When I began this project, I had no idea of how this project would influence my life as well as my family live.

This program has allowed me to build special relationships with members and share my personal witness and struggles. The program has given me more of an appreciation of being a minister.

This program has help me to deal with my own hurts coming up as a child as well as being hurt in the ministry. The call that God has placed upon my life has helped me become a better man, a better pastor, a better husband, a better father, a better son and a better brother. Not only did this project model affect my life but it also affected the lives of the members and those that participated.

Understanding the change in ministry and understanding the call of ministry and understanding the policy of the church has greatly changed my perspective about itinerant

ministry. When writing my spiritual autobiography, I must admit that there were some things that I really was aware of. There was some past hurt and failures that I was not happy about. As I wrote, tears connected at the bottom of my chin. During the time that I shared with the other pastors and participants the emotions were great. Getting to know the people better was a great joy and I was proud to call myself their pastor. This project will help develop a model that will change the way not only the way the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church will appoint pastors but all the Methodist body churches.

It is my desire in the future to publish this project, so it can be a resource to fully help churches understand itinerant ministry. In addition, it is my desire to travel across the Methodist body to teach and train other pastors. In doing this, this project will help solve the problem that the Methodist church has had for many years. Hopefully, this is the beginning to do more research towards helping to find solutions in appointing itinerant pastors. In addition, it is also my desire that this project will help our episcopal leadership change the process of appointing pastors.

This process has given me the opportunity to study more and to do some great research. This project has given me the zeal to continue to write and make a difference in someone's life. It has given me the desire to become a better pastor and a better leader. It has caused me to become more serious about the ministry. I pray that my family will enjoy and embrace this time with me and I thank God for this moment.

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